LOUIS XVIII

J. LUCAS-DUBRETON

BY J. LUCAS-DUBRETON

SAMUEL PEPYS

LOUIS XVIII

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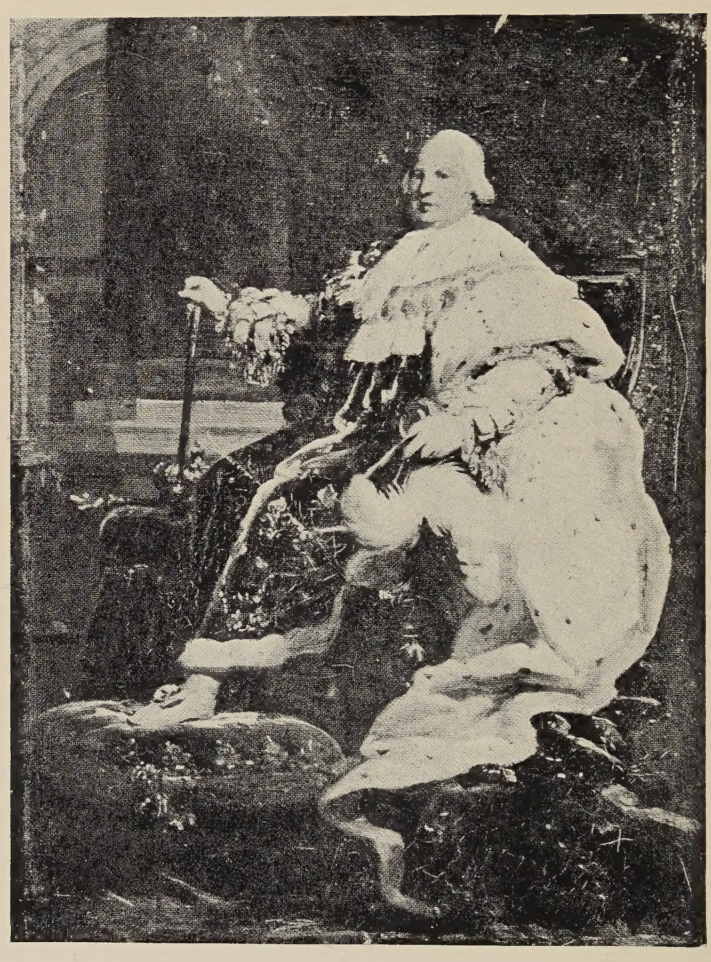

LOUIS XVIII, 1814

By Gérard

(Versailles Museum)

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LOUIS XVIII

BY

J. LUCAS-DUBRETON

Translated by

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A

Monsieur G. Lenotre

en témoignage de respectueuse amitié

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LOUIS XVIII

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CHAPTER I

THE COMTE DE PROVENCE

THE Sieur Duruflé, poet laureate of the French Academy and valet to Monseigneur the Comte de Provence, was kneeling before his master putting on his stockings. He performed his task as carefully as possible, but it was an easier matter for him to polish off a couple of alexandrines than to pull the silk stocking up the Comte's calf with the required gentleness; and one of the royal hairs was caught in the meshes.

"How stupid you are!" the prince cried.

"I did not know that a lack of skill in putting on Monsieur's stockings was a proof of stupidity."

"It is a proof of stupidity not to be able to do properly anything that one has undertaken to do."

Duruflé was crushed. Monseigneur was as a rule placid and courteous. He did not think it beneath him to discourse on literature with his servants, which

he did gracefully, in carefully chosen language, a trifle old-fashioned, perhaps, but strictly classical. Moderation and amiability seemed to be his essential characteristics. And here he was losing his temper over a trifle! Duruflé was dumbfounded. He had paid a high price for his post, and found the life pleasant; and all of a sudden he was to be disgraced for having pulled one of the Comte's hairs.

What sort of a man was he whom he had the honour to serve? To judge from his countenance, he was full of good-nature. He was short, very thick-set, very fat, with a broad forehead, blue eyes, a high colour, and a prepossessing manner. He detested all forms of bodily activity, from which, in any case, he was practically debarred by his stoutness: although he was only thirty at the date of this incident (1785), he could not mount a horse without being helped into the stirrups. He seldom went out hunting in the neighbourhood of Versailles; he preferred to sit in his library talking quietly, discussing with subtlety one of Horace's odes or one of Quinault's tragedies.

Could the poet laureate wish for another master? The love of literature which he and the Comte had in common had hitherto seemed to him a fair guarantee that he would remain in favour; but now he began to doubt it. Perhaps, he said to himself, his master's plumpness was artificial, his pleasant manner assumed for reasons of policy. Were sedentary tastes and intellectual pleasures really the whole contents of his

soul? Duruflé sought the opinions of capable judges, those trained observers who can see through all the ramifications of an intrigue and analyse characters at a glance. His eyes were opened: he sold his post and disappeared.

Had his master's portrait been painted for him in too sombre colours? Probably it had: still, the fact remains that Monsieur's character baffled the most expert judges. Joseph II, Emperor of Austria, who was regarded as the philosopher of his age, said of him: "*C'est un être indefinissable.*"

His childhood had given no indication that the royal family was one day to contain a human enigma. He was an easy-going, easily-managed boy, with a straightforward expression, plump cheeks and a heavy chin—as Vanloo has depicted him for us at Versailles, in his Court dress. His habit of talking little and seeming to reflect before he spoke caused high opinions to be held of him: one of his tutors, the Abbé Berthier, said of him in tones of conviction: "He has a head for affairs of State." His intellectual superiority became an accepted legend at Court; when the future Louis XVI had a difficult question put to him, he replied with disarming humility, "You must ask my brother of Provence."

He was regarded as the clever one of the family. At fifteen he knew Latin and had a smattering of several other languages; his tutors observed that he was particularly fond of the moral side of history.

Perhaps the embryo moralist was somewhat lacking in modesty and sensibility. The fact that his father the Dauphin, who, unlike other royal personages, himself attended to the education of his children, thought fit to show the "infant phenomenon" his name entered in the register of baptisms underneath the most plebeian names imaginable, and to teach him that a prince who had never shed tears could not be a good one, suggests that this was the case. His excellent father, a disciple of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, was anxious that his offspring should be capable of shedding tears. He was not successful with the Comte de Provence, who, when he reached man's estate, had perfect manners, but behaved with circumspection and crept about on tiptoe.

The Comte de Provence never did what his elder brother Louis XVI used to do—take people into corners and then, when he could think of nothing to say, roar with laughter and make off again. Nor was he, like his younger brother the Comte d'Artois, full of fun, as lively as a young page: he would never have stopped before Louis XIV's statue among the thickets of the Orangerie and called out, "*Bonjour, grand-papa!*"—freaks like this, which delighted the ladies and made them say "Artois is our hope," seemed to him highly reprehensible. He remained correct, punctual, careful of the proprieties; his voice had always the same inflection; bursts of enthusiasm were unknown to him; his self-control was amazing.

He set store by his reputation of being an enlightened prince. Voltaire had said, "If only Monsieur will see to it, good taste will remain alive in France." To justify his reputation, Monsieur surrounded himself with a carefully chosen clique: Rulhière, who specialised in barbed epigrams and daring *contes;* Ducis, a ponderous dramatist who represented the neoclassic school and smeared over the Shakespearian fire with a colourless varnish; a mingling of the pleasing and the severe such as the "great century" loved. Among his valets were Arnauld, a gifted poet and future member of the French Academy, to whom he gave infallible recipes for the construction of a good tragedy, and the unhappy Duruflé. His *intendant* was one Morel, a writer of opera librettos, with whom he himself deigned to collaborate; and if the opera succeeded, he plumed himself on being a successful author.

The *Gazette de France* and the *Journal de Paris* inserted verses and acrostics the authorship of which he did not avow, but which he sent in himself; he composed caustic rhymes, invented hoaxes to deceive simple souls: the discovery of an imaginary beast, a subscription for a man capable of walking on water. Human credulity and stupidity were a source of constant entertainment to him.

From his library on the ground-floor of the palace, looking on to the flower-beds of the Orangerie, he did not contemplate the blue-grey woods that bounded

the view, or the mist that rose at evening from the pool of the Suisses: he assembled his little circle of men of letters and devoted himself to the pleasures of the intellect. He had a good stock of brilliant sayings, of apposite quotations which he knew how to use effectively at Court gatherings; sometimes he took from his pocket a set of unfinished verses he had to complete, or he made expert riddle-solvers rack their brains without ever finding the right answer. The women were helpless before the stout prince's rhetoric; he spoke a language they did not understand, and his carefully prepared sallies reduced to silence all who had not the gift of repartee: this superiority was pleasing to him.

He was a man of taste, perhaps, but of poor taste; a moralist, but full of artificialities, with no real sense of beauty, for ever losing himself, like most of his contemporaries, amid a mass of charming trivialities.

He lived on a royal scale; his household was as numerous as that of Louis XVI. In 1786, eight hundred "officials" were attached to his person, the gentlemen-in-waiting at the top, then the almoners, chaplains, butlers, caterers, apothecaries, gun-carriers, masters of the hounds, bakers and pages, right down to the humble watchman. His appetite and his thirst were enormous, worthy of Louis XIV in his prime: he consumed 7½ litres of wine daily, and his bakery, cellar, kitchen and utensils cost on an average 1382 *livres* a day. His bill of fare was stupendous, though

the items of which it consisted would make a *gourmet's* mouth water. It is not surprising that from his youth up he was stout, more or less gouty and notoriously plethoric.

When he appeared at Court, he was not a figure to excite admiration; his walk was a waddle. He made up for his bad deportment, however, by the magnificence of his clothes. He was interested in horses, and had in his stables valuable beasts, finer than the King's, though he made very little use of them. When he gave parties, they were always splendid, and the ingenious surprises in which his soul delighted gave them an additional fillip; in fact, the king could not entertain so lavishly and so wittily. Ill-natured people condemned his unreasonable extravagance, which was, moreover, somewhat mortifying, not to Louis XVI, who was not thin-skinned, but to Marie Antoinette. But this did not make Monsieur knock a penny off his expenditure; amid the crowds which thronged to his entertainments, he seemed to say: "I am only Number Two, but do I not deserve to be Number One?"

He assumed the pose of a libertine, because it suited the rôle he had assumed: he related his successes in love, or let others relate them. The story ran that he had been surprised by a jealous husband, had a pistol shot fired at him and leapt over a wall: he was active enough, it seemed, when his life was in danger. It was rumoured, too, that the Prince of Monaco had

blown out his brains on account of Monsieur's attentions to the Princess. Other less tragic escapades were talked of. But people were not inclined to believe these stories; although Monsieur affected, with ladies, a kind of attachment which "almost made one think that intimacy and Platonic affection were mutually exclusive," it was very hard to see in him a lady-killer.

In 1771, at the age of sixteen, he had been married to Josephine of Savoy, daughter of the King of Sardinia. The celebrations had been sumptuous: Monsieur, in a coat of gold cloth, had witnessed from the terrace of the palace a fireworks display the chief item of which was a set-piece representing himself and his bride outlined in fire. Although Madame was not personally attractive—she had a swarthy skin, too thick eyebrows, a long nose and a pronounced moustache [1]—Monsieur played the part of a lover admirably. At the marriage service his "yes" was uttered in such ringing tones that someone expressed surprise, to which he replied, "I wish they could have heard it at Turin!"

Their married life seemed to start well enough, but it was only a flash. Madame had homely habits which were not to her husband's taste. She did not show herself much at Versailles; she preferred the little house which Monsieur had built for her at

[1] Madame du Deffand awarded her the prize for ugliness, and Louis XVI said frankly, "My sister-in-law is not pretty." Another contemporary declared her to be "the most perfect nonentity."

Montreuil, and which may still be seen in the Avenue de Paris. It has been whitewashed in recent years, and has the effect of a kind of *bourgeois*, less decorative Trianon. It was then, we are told, a charming place, with its trees and lake; and there Madame lived in the Italian style, with no other company but that of her women-in-waiting. To one of these she was particularly attached, a Madame de Gourbillon, from Lille, where her husband was head of the postal service. Madame's chief amusement seemed to be cooking. She possessed some valuable recipes—for example, she could make a certain bird soup which Monsieur sometimes came to feast on: when he was expected, the bill of fare was doubled.

In short, Madame, plain, awkward, with very little interest in literature, occupied no place in the life of the Comte de Provence; he had forbidden her to attach herself to the Queen's set, to have anything to do with Madame de Lamballe and Madame de Polignac—above all, to take part in theatricals. To judge from what we know of her, this prohibition cannot have caused her much distress; she could not bring herself to use rouge and had a horror of social observances. What she liked best was to play the farmer's wife, not as a sovereign who finds entertainment in stooping from her rank, but quite simply and genuinely. A wife like this could not suit a literary, refined prince. Of an evening, when Queen Marie Antoinette went to Madame de Lamballe's apartments,

the Comte d'Artois departed to the frail ladies of Paris and Madame sat contentedly with her sewing women, Monsieur made his way to Madame de Balbi.

If you go along the lake of the Suisses, towards the Rue de Satory, you will come to a wrought-iron gate, a charming piece of work, covered with pale-green moss. The gate creaks as you push it, and there lies before you the most charming deserted garden imaginable. The water of the pond sleeps under a quilt of water lilies and marsh ranuculus; on its brink, ferns and weeds grow rank; the ruined wall is hidden under masses of ivy; the branches of the trees, intertwined, form a baroque dome over your head. There is scarcely a path, only a little bridge of worm-eaten wood which crosses the pond, now shrunken into a brook. At the end of the garden is a grotto, sharply outlined, very dark and one would think comfortable. Of old, the water descended from it in a zig-zag stream, but now it has been invaded by the mauve and pink flowers which grow on the rocks. And above, perched on the top of this rock, is a little octagonal summer-house, fit haunt for a Stylites and a perfect spot for meditation. How frolicsome and capricious an air this little garden has compared with the rectilinear majesty of the palace, its cleanliness, its scrubbed and polished look. It symbolises freedom after constraint, ease after ceremonial. Grandeur, of course, it has none; but it has, instead, the charm of a piece of nature now left to its own devices, but dis-

ciplined in bygone days by a skilful hand. It suggests not Piranese, with his gloomy heaps of ruins, but Hubert Robert, that glorious decorative painter, who bathes his landscapes, so peaceful for all their wildness, in golden light.

In these surroundings Monsieur had placed his mistress, Anne de Caumont La Force, the Comtesse de Balbi. Let us put out of our minds the riot of natural beauty that delighted us a minute ago and reconstruct the favourite's domain with the help the antiquarians can give us. At the first glance, the place must have made a fine impression, with its sixteen vases of white marble ranged along the front facing the palace. The rooms themselves, however, are less imposing. One can see that they were intended for conversation and the amusement of people of leisure: the dome-shaped boudoir with leaded windows looking on to the pond; the billiard-room with its cues and maces in their metal sheaths; the round *salon* where all the card-tables in the world seem to have assembled—"*loteaux*, *tric-trac*, *marbrouck*, *brelan*, *trous de madame*." Then there were my lady's bedroom, tapestried with *toile de Jouy* covered with roses, with the dressing table and toilet articles stained with red Chinese varnish and gilded; the winter garden, the library, and the reading-room with its round peristyle.

And, as the central figure, there came and went a young woman, by no means pretty, with her face marked by small-pox but lighted up by sparkling eyes

and crowned with beautiful hair; when she laughed, she showed discoloured teeth, but she had so much charm and gaiety that defects like this were overlooked. She read, talked on every subject under the sun, mocked at convention and gambled furiously. It was with good reason that the *salon* was furnished as it was; for, like the lunatic of whom Saint-Simon tells us, she would have played cards all night with her feet in water. Monsieur knew all about it; she sometimes borrowed 100,000 louis from him all at once to pay her debts. He liked her as she was, for she presided over her little court as charmingly as she abused her acquaintances.

Her reputation was not spotless; a certain amount of scandal had attended her separation from her husband, the Comte de Balbi; and since then she had accepted the homage of M. de Jaucourt at the same time as that of the Comte de Provence—the former, people said, a good deal less platonic than the latter. She was appointed lady-in-waiting to Madame, who for a time honoured her with her jealousy; but things were soon smoothed over, the *liaison* became public and accepted; Madame de Balbi summoned her friends to Versailles, and, having a keen sense of filial duty, made her parents an allowance. The prince paid up without flinching. He found the garden in the Rue de Satory, whence from the top of his rock grotto, he could see the severe profile of the palace, a pleasant observation post.

But the observer found himself rather too much observed; he lacked elbow-room: he felt he must live farther out, not under the shadow of Versailles. Chalgrin built him a country cottage at Brunoy, at the foot of a hill by the river Yerres. Here he had all that he delighted in: for purposes of conversation, a *salon* furnished with exquisite taste, a study tapestried in green, with marble busts round the walls, and a spacious library for his reflections and jottings. The garden ran down in terraces to the river; fountains of flashing water stood at regular intervals like altars: then came a portico of limes leading to a pergola of orange-trees "*de la plus belle santé.*" The whole arrangement was so harmonious, the simplicity so perfectly maintained, that the spectator forgave the shut-in-ness of the place, the restricted view. Monsieur, for his part, was not a man for views; the open spaces of the countryside made no appeal to him. His interests lay in his immediate surroundings.

His correspondence with Gustavus III, King of Sweden, a good friend of his, throws some light on his ideas before the Revolution. To judge from these letters, written with a vehemence that gives the impression of sincerity, Monsieur was consumed with envy and ambition.

In his intercourse with the King—that is, of course, in private—he said very much what he pleased. But he was by no means the only person who did that. Louis XVI's loud laughter, his simple, jovial ways,

injured his prestige: the Court dandies used to call him *le gros cochon.* This was far from displeasing to Monsieur, who could not foresee that he would later be treated in the same way. But he prudently contented himself with criticising his brother's want of decision, which he summed up in a happy phrase. "To get an idea of his character," he used to say, "imagine yourself trying to keep oiled billiard balls together."

His attitude towards the queen was one of friendship mingled with admiration. When she left the Port-Royal for Fontainebleau by boat, he prepared charming surprises for her: for example, he sent the Duc d'Orléans, who lived at Sainte-Assise, a silver net to catch "the beauty that would pass" along the river. At Brunoy mediæval *fêtes* were held: warriors asleep in the thickets awoke on the appearance of their sovereign and fought under her eyes: it goes without saying that the queen's colours were victorious. Monsieur spared no expense, and as this second court was much freer in its manners than that of Versailles, people amused themselves there in their own way. Louis XVI himself is said to have lost something of his reputation for continence on one of his visits to Brunoy.

Princes at play!—in reality it was an armed peace. Marie Antoinette said of her brother-in-law: "Monsieur says disgusting things about me; he carries on petty intrigues of which any honest man would be ashamed. He combines with a very weak character a taste for underhand and sometimes positively dirty

LE JEUNE COMTE DE PROVENCE

After a painting by Van Loo

(Versailles Museum)

methods." Monsieur did not allow himself to speak with equal sincerity, but he inwardly regarded his sister-in-law as the most serious obstacle to his career. Having perfectly summed up the king, he lived in terror lest the queen should become less frivolous and begin to pay attention to affairs of State; he was afraid of her encroaching on his future domain, and did his best to restrict her to her round of merry entertainments and fashionable idleness. If she had no children—and Louis XVI's indifference suggested that this was likely—he would stand very near the throne; and then people would see what an enlightened prince could do!

In 1778 these hopes were dashed. An heir was expected. It was a hard blow, which he bore as well as he could. "Common-sense, a little philosophy, perhaps, and trust in God have enabled me to accept the situation *en grand capitaine*," he wrote to the King of Sweden. He displayed no joy, which would have been hypocritical; no grief, which might have been attributed to weakness of mind. He remained, outwardly, perfectly calm; to all questions, all attempts to ascertain his views, he replied in words of pious resignation. But his inner thoughts were more difficult to subdue; "they sometimes rebelled," and the prince, baulked of his expectations, found it a very hard task to discipline them. Apart from his hereditary right, he felt that he had a special aptitude for the duties of a monarch, and, above all, he was certain

of his superiority to the rest of his family: a vanity based on Divine unction.

He found the uselessness to which policy and circumstances condemned him unbearable. Excluded from the King's Council by the Maurepas party, cordially detested by the Choiseul party, suspected by all, he assumed the rôle of an amused cynic. When it became known that the queen was expecting a child for a second time, he received the news indifferently. "Everyone has to carry his cross in this world," he said: "he may not like it, but he carries it all the same." Having once assumed this pose, he never abandoned it. It became an understood thing that Monsieur held entirely aloof from State affairs and lived the life of an epicure, chiefly interested in food and books; he was said to be dividing his time between sumptuous repasts and a great work on natural philosophy. No doubt he would make himself heard when occasion arose—but the fact remained that he never did.

Nevertheless, those who followed Court intrigues closely came from time to time on what seemed to them to be traces of his activity, like the little heaps of earth at regular intervals which mark the route of a mole along one of the Versailles avenues. There appeared, just at the time when the queen's second child was awaited, a quantity of coarse songs and rhymes, each conveying an insult under the cover of a jest. Their themes were the fatuity of the royal

cipher Louis XVI, the immorality of Marie Antoinette and the illegitimacy of their children. Was Monsieur quite unconnected with the springing up of this crop of filth, the eruptions of these petty volcanoes? Were not the poetasters who played his game in his pay? If the Dauphin were really a bastard and could not succeed to the throne, the Comte de Provence was certain of the crown. Moreover, it was said that Madame de Balbi's house was the headquarters of a conspiracy the declared aim of which was to depose the king and have Monsieur proclaimed Regent of France. People drew their own conclusions. Some went even further and declared that, in his eagerness to secure his ends, the Comte de Provence had attempted to murder his brother when out hunting.

History has disposed of the alleged attempt to murder the king; but the fact that it was alleged is suggestive. The other charge may have been pure slander—perhaps, for where a man like the future Louis XVIII is concerned one cannot be positive of anything. He kept himself in the background; if he did not actually pay people to insult his relations, he did nothing to prevent their being insulted; the poison thus instilled drop by drop into the veins of the people had no terrors for him. It was no business of his. He lived on contentedly in his narrow and mysterious sphere, of whose exact nature so little was known, and conspired, there can be no doubt, under the cloak of literature, while maintaining an ostentatious pose of

gilded mediocrity. Imprisoned in its carcase of fat, his mind waited his time.

But there was one thing which he took pains to preserve without appearing to trouble himself about it—his popularity. When, in his earlier years, he had travelled through France with his younger brother, the Comte d'Artois, he had practised the art of talking to and flattering people of humble rank. The college pedants whom he made a point of visiting were delighted by his erudition—for he knew his Horace as well as any don.

When, at Bordeaux, his guides expatiated on the beauty of the Exchange, he replied in a loud voice, "I have not come to see the building, but the Bordeaux business men who occupy it." At Marseilles he charmed the sailors by his simple manners and warmly embraced their delegates. He returned to Paris enchanted with his experiences and said to Louis XVI: "My dear brother, we *are* popular!" He had, to tell the truth, spent an appalling amount of money on the tour and thoroughly prepared the ground with a view to eventualities.

When Louis XVI summoned the Assembly of Notables in 1787 to give advice as to the best means of restoring the financial situation, Monsieur was appointed president of the *premier bureau*. This placed him in the public eye. It was not long before people were saying that the *premier bureau* ought to be called the *comité des sages:* its president showed himself un-

hampered by prejudices, equally opposed to abuses and to rash innovations. He was skilful in debate. When a fiery orator quoted from one of the tragedies the line

La couronne a ses droits mais le peuple a les siens,

he at once replied by quoting another line from the same tragedy,

Renverser un état n'est pas le réformer.

The monarchical organisation of the State, he said, might no doubt be subjected to certain modifications. The *tiers-état* did not play the part in the national life to which it was entitled; he would, therefore, vote for its double representation in the States-General; but for Heaven's sake let there be no rash tinkering with the established order! Thus, royalist and reformer at the same time, Monsieur seemed to the middle-classes who were to carry out the Revolution an honest and virtuous *citoyen*. He did not disdain the term, for it placed him in a different category both from the king, whose weakness he knew, and from his younger brother d'Artois, who would not hear of any concession being made. As the situation developed, he maintained his rôle of an enlightened, public-spirited prince. He did not become leader of the opposition; on the contrary, he continually repeated that he "was going to plant his foot on the spot from which

the king had just removed his." His part was that of a moderator, skilfully balancing between extremist views on either side and strengthening with his presence the undecided, fluid mass which is commonly found in assemblies, and has been termed, under different régimes, the Marsh (*Marais*) or the Belly (*Ventre*).

His attitude did not give universal satisfaction at Court. His aunts, it is true, talked laughingly of "our Jacobin nephew," but others took the matter less lightly, and vehemently criticised Monsieur's weakness for new ideas and his desire to please his supporters. His vote in favour of the *tiers-état* was declared to have been the deciding factor in favour of the Revolution. Even the king showed signs of surprise. "My brother seems to know how to flatter everybody," he said. Monsieur did not care what people said, he felt the breath of popular favour on his cheek. When his carriage passed through a crowd in the street, he leant out of the window and cried, "Take care not to hurt anyone." The crowd cheered, and the *citoyen* they applauded thought, as he leant back on the cushions in the corner: "My brother throws his confidence as a fisherman throws his harpoon, but the fish pulls him along. No fish will ever pull me."

But one day his self-confidence received a shock. There was a nobleman, the Marquis de Favras, imprisoned in the Châtelet on the charge of conspiracy. Favras made no revelations; he had, however, formerly

belonged to Monsieur's military establishment, and from this fact it was only a short step to the conclusion that Monsieur was at the head of a counter-revolutionary plot. It was undoubtedly, popular rumour said, Monsieur's intention to carry off the king, compel him to abdicate, and make himself master of Paris at the head of 30,000 men.

According to the Comte de Provence himself, the truth was simpler than that; being in need of money, he had obtained a loan of 2,000,000 francs from certain bankers through the agency of Favras. Nevertheless, the blow had to be parried: and the *citoyen* did not hesitate to make a formal appearance before the members of the Paris Commune and defend himself. He made an honest and sincere statement, spoke of his money troubles, and declared that he had not seen Favras for fifteen years. It was absurd to suspect him of treason: to do so was to mistake one of the best of citizens for an enemy of the Revolution. He came without fear, he said, to justify himself before the gentlemen of the Commune. His personal opinion was that the time was ripe for a great transformation in the State; and he concluded with a phrase which shows how thoroughly he had assimilated the jargon of the first phase of the Revolution: "The royal authority should be the bulwark of the national liberty and the national liberty the foundation of the royal authority."

He had a success: he rose at a bound from the

depths of unpopularity into which he had fallen, and became once more the object of the applause of the masses. Who could disbelieve the patriotic protestations of a prince of the blood, so genial, so jovial, as fat as only a really good man can be?

Favras was hanged soon afterwards, and the women danced round the gallows.

It had been a sharp warning to him. This wretched conspirator had forced him to make a definite statement of his opinions, and the die-hards could not forgive him. "Is it possible that Bourbon blood should sink so low?" the Prince de Condé asked: "can it really flow in the veins of a man (so-called) who commits an action obviously dictated by fear and meanness? He is done for!" (*"Il est dans la boue!"*)

That was saying too much; for Monsieur now considered himself, at any rate, perfectly secure. He lived on quietly in his palace, the Petit Luxembourg, far enough from the Tuileries for him to have a pleasant feeling of liberty, and with delightful gardens for him to walk in. The setting of his life had changed but little. One can imagine the future King of France, already stout but still nimble, going through the main gateway which opens on to the Rue Vaugirard, heavily ascending the magnificent staircase which in these days knows only democratic celebrities, passing through the drawing-rooms, and, of a night, laying his stout body down to rest in his alcove adorned with gilded columns.

He had his own little court, composed of persons

whom he could trust. Madame de Balbi lived close by, in a house with direct access to the gardens; she could get into the Palace unseen through a little door. Later, nothing would please her but that she should live at the Luxembourg itself, and Monsieur had a luxurious suite of rooms fitted up for her in one of the summer-houses, surrounded by lawns, shrubberies in the English style, and all the accessories indispensable to aristocratic ladies playing at country life—dairy, cow-shed, chicken-run, and pigeon-loft. Perhaps the capricious Comtesse grew tired of the amenities which surrounded her. At any rate, one day the whole place caught fire. The suite had cost a trifling 200,000 francs: nevertheless, Monsieur immediately had it rebuilt, refurnished, and upholstered anew in green and white figured silk with gold fringes: he grudged nothing. His mistress had made her *salon* one of the most charming social centres in Paris: and he was indebted to her for something more than that. She had, quite unconsciously, secured him a favourite.

For this Bourbon had the hereditary taint—the need of some familiar, ever present, ever ready to listen to confidences, to be the silent, discreet receptacle of his master's inmost thoughts.

The Comte d'Avaray, a gentleman poor in fortune and in health, had been presented to Madame de Balbi. She had taken a fancy to him, had been touched by his distressed state, and had had a thousand louis sent to him in the name of the Comte de

Provence. Astute, cultivated, and a good talker, he made his way step by step in the Luxembourg *salons*. Monsieur made a friend of him: he liked d'Avaray's reserved manners, the suffering depicted on his face; he began to take pleasure in seeing him every day and thinking aloud in his presence. D'Avaray comported himself in such a manner as to retain the confidence he had won; and henceforward Monsieur never did anything or made any decision without consulting his favourite.

Monsieur had plenty of use for a judicious adviser. He felt that events were getting beyond his control. His pleasant life in a pleasant place, his talks in the green and white silk *salon*, were like the twilight of a glorious day. He had to look out for squalls. He knew he was out of favour at Court: he was compared there to the wretched Gaston d'Orléans, brother to Louis XIII, whose natural inclination it was to betray his kinsmen, surrounded himself with "dangerous vermin," and, when he had compromised people, gaily left them in the lurch. His protestations of attachment to the royal family were dismissed as sheer humbug. He had got off too easily in the October days, when the furious mob invaded the palace at Versailles. Nothing had been seen of him, his rooms had not been touched: and at the very moment when the dazed king and his trembling queen were getting into their carriage to go to Paris, escorted by shrieking women and men armed with pikes, he had appeared in

the best of spirits, smartly dressed. His fearlessness amid such terrible scenes was surely eloquent of secret alliances and understandings with the forces of disorder!

Even those who had formerly done homage to his intellectual superiority now reduced him to the level of a provincial *café* wit. He had lost the attraction of the unknown which had been his chief asset; his court was a farce, its members took for real distinction an insistence on petty details of etiquette; he maintained his pose of a man of polished manners and honeyed speech; but it was all sham. All things considered, as a prince he was "bad form."

His former friends of the Hôtel de Ville had no better an opinion of him. It was no longer possible to balance, as he had tried to do, between Royalism and the Revolution, for the full weight of the masses was forcing down one of the scales, and his reputation for civic virtue was going to the winds. He was commonly dubbed traitor, scoundrel, even fratricide, born under a star fatal to the happiness of the French people. The most deplorable destiny was predicted for him. "As soon," it was said, "as that contemptible great lump of flesh returns to dust, it will seem never to have existed." [1]

And this was the result of all his prudence and circumspection. His younger brother, whose unpopu-

[1] The motto *Latet anguis in herba* ("the snake lurks in the grass") was invented for him.

larity had been notorious even before 1789, had put as much space as was needful between the victorious fanatics and himself; he had long ago quitted his country's inhospitable soil. Should Monsieur follow his example? He debated this grave problem with his faithful d'Avaray in his retreat at the Luxembourg. Not only the king's position, but his own, was becoming increasingly dangerous; and he had, thank Heaven, a sense of self-preservation. Should he fly before Louis XVI? Duty and decency alike forbade it. Should he fly with him? If he did the enterprise would certainly fail; they could not slip out of the country undetected. And if the Tuileries did not decide for flight, what should he do? His rôle in his own set was still that of the royal *citoyen;* he must live up to the part, make a show of confidence, and perhaps regain his fleeting popularity. But the public excitement was growing; the taste for blood was becoming universal and summary acts of justice more widespread.

It was known that plans for flight were being hatched, and the people of Paris kept a watchful eye on its princes.

One day a rumour got about that the Comte de Provence was preparing to leave Paris recently with *Mesdames tantes*, the king's and his own aunts. A crowd rushed at once to the Luxembourg and tried to force its way into the palace. In its anxiety to make sure that Monsieur had not fled, it would not be con-

tent with assurances, but insisted on seeing and touching him. The noise of the shouting rose to the room where he sat. The crowd howled fearfully under his windows: a sea of human beings, men brandishing weapons and frantic women, beat upon the doors of the main entrance and washed the walls of the palace.

He wondered whether he was to have his "October day" in miniature, and whether he should wait till his doors were forced. He profited by the experience he had gained then. When the revolutionaries had succeeded in a thing once, they always tried it again; he would not give them time. A sinking feeling of fear at his stomach, he ordered one of his ushers to admit not the whole maddened crowd, but the women, and only the women. In rushed a stream of furies, market viragoes, yelling and shaking their fists; a whirlwind of skirts swept up the main staircase, where as a rule a dignified silence reigned. Monsieur came to meet them in the *salon*, smiling.

"I leave Paris? I have not the slightest intention of doing so. I shall never leave the king."

The comedy played at the Hôtel de Ville began again. The furies lost their confidence; within these still inviolate walls their passion grew cold, and with the men not there to support them, their timidity reasserted itself. One of them, however, bolder or more suspicious than the others, cried: "But if the king left us, you would stay, wouldn't you?" Monsieur's memory stood him in good stead: he remembered what

the Cardinal de Retz had said in the days of the Fronde, and replied with a shrug of the shoulders: "*Pour une femme d'esprit, vous me faites là une question bien bête.*" And all of them, disarmed, burst out laughing.

Indeed, he always came off well in public scenes: he could turn the most critical situations to his advantage. The same day he went to see the king at the Tuileries, escorted by 6,000 people. All were astonished and filled with admiration—were almost ready, indeed, to forget the calumnies which had once been launched against him. What secret charm did he possess that thus enabled him to tame the revolutionary hydra? He himself knew only too well what these reactions of popular feeling were really worth; he feared the effects of that mob-instinct which drives a crowd straight from enthusiasm to massacre. It would be wisest not to count on the incident at all.

In April, 1791, Mirabeau died—the man whose task it was, in the eyes of Monsieur, to direct the Revolution into peaceful channels. He now began to think seriously of flight: life was no longer possible in such unstable conditions; he was worn out with anxiety. Gone was the *bel vivere* to which he had become so pleasantly accustomed, the days so agreeably filled with women's prattle, his constitutionals, his quiet games in surroundings of upholstered ease! He suffered under the new régime; he grew thin. It was not very noticeable, for, as someone said, "he has

flesh to spare and does not resemble a spectre yet"; but he was quite definitely growing thin.

Must he make his peace with the demagogues, tread all his convictions under foot, accept the unworthy priests who were being thrust upon him, deny the belief in the divine right of kings which was the mainspring of his life? Hitherto, while the king hesitated and the queen fought, he had manœuvred; but manœuvring was no longer possible. On the other hand, he was hardly the man to make a stand against the popular movement. Though able to keep his countenance at dramatic moments, he was easily alarmed.

But he had to make up his mind one way or the other; if he gave up the idea of flight, the only choice lay between apostacy and martyrdom.

CHAPTER II

COBLENZ, THE ROYAL CITY

ON Friday, June 17, 1791, d'Avaray went into Monsieur's room and said: "Shall I have our boots greased?"

"Yes, for Monday."

Everything had been arranged long beforehand; Monsieur left nothing to chance in a matter of life and death. He had thought at first of getting away to some country place—Neuilly, Auteuil or Bagatelle —and making his escape thence; but he finally decided to start from Paris itself, for there was an exit from the palace, leading from the "little suite" to the Petit Luxembourg, which was unknown to the National Guard. To satisfy the police regulations, he had obtained a passport, made out in the names of Mr. and Miss Foster, which had been issued to Madame de Balbi by the British Embassy a long time before; and thanks to the Avaray's skill in faking documents, it was soon in the names of the Messrs. Foster. The Comte de Provence had decided not to

travel in his gig, a very light vehicle for a man of his weight, and had ordered a hired carriage.

It was not easy to decide what route he should take once outside Paris. The roads leading to the northern and eastern frontiers were to be regularly blocked with traffic that Monday, though no one knew it. Madame de Gourbillon was arranging for Madame's *escampativo* with a praiseworthy energy and devotion. Though she had fallen out of favour with Monsieur for a short time in consequence of disagreeable rumours getting about concerning her morals, she had recovered her footing in the household, and was lavish in her demonstrations of fidelity. Madame was to make, with her, for Douai and Orchies. The king and queen, who had decided to fly the same night, would probably—though Monsieur was not yet sure of it—take the Montmédy road. And now we must think of ourselves! Master and minion deliberated, weighed pros and cons, and at last chose the route via Soissons, Laon and Maubeuge. There was little traffic on that road and it would be easy to find horses; moreover, as far as Soissons the travellers might be thought to be going to Rheims, while, as far as Laon, Givet might be taken to be their destination.

On the Saturday Monsieur was busy correcting the draft manifesto which the king was to leave on his table to be found after he had gone. He not only corrected its style—he was most fastidious regarding style and had no confidence at all in his elder brother

in this respect—but thoroughly remodelled it. The sorry string of platitudes it contained, the painfully uninspired recital of the insults received by the sovereign since the opening of the States-General, were doubtless the fruit of this eleventh-hour correction. Yet the facts of the case afforded material for a noble and dignified protest; and one may well ask whether, that Saturday, Monsieur expressed himself as he would have done had he been dealing with his own case. The result of his labours was that the tone of the royal document was worthier of the kitchen than of the throne.

Monday came at last. Monsieur went to the Tuileries and embraced his sister, Madame Elisabeth, whose coolness roused his admiration, and the queen. "Try not to make me show weakness," the queen said; "I don't want people to see that I have been crying." Then it was the king's turn. Monsieur was quite calm; in four days' time, he said, they would meet again in a place of safety.

It was just eleven at night when he left the Tuileries, hoping to evade the Duc de Levis, who usually accompanied him to the Luxembourg. But the Duc was a terribly precise person, pitiless in his observance of etiquette. Monsieur put a good face on the matter and talked as if nothing were preoccupying him; but as soon as he reached the palace he announced that he was going to bed. The Duc, who was accustomed to sit up gossiping with his master till a late hour, was

astonished. "I slept badly last night and want to make up for it," said Monsieur, and he went to bed. But hardly had the Duc removed his tiresome presence than he got up, drew the curtains of his alcove to, and went into his study, shutting the door again behind him. He had taken the first step towards safety.

D'Avaray was waiting for him in the little suite close by, and in a few minutes Monsieur was dressed, or rather transformed. He had on a big blue frock-coat with red facings and gilt buttons, a broad lace frill, and chamois leather gloves. On his head was a curly black wig, and above that a round hat with a large tricolour cockade on the brim; on his feet were a pair of high boots which he had taken the precaution to try on a few days before. He slipped three hundred louis into his pocket, and was hastily following his companion, when he turned back.

"I have forgotten my stick and my second snuff-box!"

"Do nothing rash," d'Avaray replied.

They crossed the little suite and came to the door leading into the courtyard of the Grand Luxembourg.

It was a beautiful night. Before the dark frontage of the palace d'Avaray saw a coach, besides the carriage which was to convey them. He was uneasy, but Monsieur reassured him; the coach was his wife's. After they had waited a few minutes, D'Avaray went out to make sure the coast was clear. The coach had gone, and they could start.

"Come along with me," said d'Avaray in English.

"I am ready," Monsieur replied in the same language.

"The Pont-Neuf," d'Avaray said to the driver.

The carriage got under way; they passed through the gate of the Luxembourg, and the Comte de Provence, either in genuine satisfaction or feeling the necessity to feign it, began to hum a couple of lines of a song: *Ça va bien, ça prend bien, ils ne se doutent de rien.*

There were few people in the streets. They met a National Guard patrol, which took no notice of them at all. Near the Mint, d'Avaray told the driver to stop. "Are you satisfied?" the man asked. "Quite. Perhaps I shall want you the day after to-morrow" —and they walked on, Monsieur taking care not to waddle, to the travelling carriage which was waiting for them close to the Quatre-Nations. This second stage of the flight was easily accomplished, and they set off again with d'Avaray's English servant, who was to give the travellers the protection of his flag.

So long as they were in Paris they had some cause for uneasiness. A post-chaise passed their carriage, and they overtook it again: they tried in vain to avoid it, and d'Avaray grew furious, though he said nothing. Without doubt the post-chaise contained members of the royal family. Oh, those princes! their inability to co-operate would ruin the best laid plans. If they went on travelling in company, it would arouse sus-

picion. Monsieur himself remained perfectly calm. He had only taken d'Avaray partly into his confidence. He said, as though making a prophecy, "That carriage is going to Douai; we shall have nothing to fear after Le Bourget." And the prophecy came true.

The dawn began to break. They reached Nanteuil. Monsieur, looking out of the window, breathed in the scent of liberty; but he did not, like Louis XVI, get out and pick flowers in the fields. He did not stop for a moment to enjoy the charms of nature; instead, he took out of his pocket a cork which he had secreted at one of his last dinners at the Luxembourg and which d'Avaray had had burnt, and darkened his eyebrows. As an additional precaution, he pretended to be asleep whenever they stopped to change horses.

So while Louis XVI and his family were making for Sainte-Menehould in their huge *berline*, a regular pantechnicon which could not pass unnoticed, Monsieur continued his journey towards the frontier in safety. He was comfortable enough in his carriage: his wig was too tight, certainly, and irritated him, but there was bound to be something to put up with. A few incidents, none of them serious, enlivened the journey. One of the postilions drove so badly that they were sure he must be a Jacobin: the tyre of one of the wheels broke, and the resourceful d'Avaray had it repaired with a double iron band: there was a dispute with the postmistress at La Capelle: while they were waiting for horses at Avesnes the carriage stood

for a quarter of an hour in the square, with the post-office on one side and a *café* full of officers on the other, but Monsieur had taken care to pull down the blind, and no one was inquisitive enough to disturb him. The last *contretemps* was in the outskirts of Maubeuge. The postilion insisted on driving through the town, but the travellers would not hear of it; fortresses must be avoided like the plague. But money can settle everything; they drove round the ramparts, and the frontier was soon crossed.

Then Monsieur, whose formidable memory was never at fault, tore the tricolour cockade from his hat and declaimed, *Vains ornements d'une indigne mollesse:* and the cockade flew in the direction of France.

After that he was easy in mind and in high spirits; he found everything a laughing matter. At Mons he was told that a lady was waiting for him at the inn La Femme Sauvage. He ascended a mean staircase, pushed open a door and entered. "It's not him! don't come in!" a voice cried, and he beheld a woman hiding under the sheets. He had been mistaken for Count Fersen, though there was obviously no resemblance between him and the handsome Fersen. He withdrew and went on to the Couronne Impériale: there too he heard a woman's voice, but gentler and showing no sign of alarm.

"Is that you, M. d'Avaray?"

Monsieur recognised Madame de Balbi's voice. It was a joyful meeting. The Countess was able to re-

inforce the inn's scanty bill of fare with a cold chicken and claret; and she gave up her bed to her royal patron. Monsieur, well fed and no longer troubled by anxieties, went to bed with the certainty of not being awakened next morning by some new revolutionary explosion. Life resumed its serene aspect, and he fell asleep. His slumbers were disturbed by no speculations as to the fate of the king and queen.

At Coblenz he was offered hospitality by his uncle Clement Wenceslas, Elector of Treves, an excellent man who was debarred from the profession of arms by ill-health and was moreover an archbishop. The accommodation provided for the Comte de Provence was not in the town itself, but at the Elector's summer residence, the *château* of Schönbornlust, about two miles away. It was a large three-storied house with two long wings. It contained two large *salons d'honneur* and fine suites of rooms, the first consideration with Monsieur. There were also outbuildings, stables big enough to hold the horses of a whole regiment, a park in the French style and a flower-garden round which clipped yews stood sentinel; from the front of the *château* a wide avenue ran to the outskirts of Coblenz. It was not Versailles, of course, but it had a sufficiently regal appearance, and Monsieur decided that it would serve his purpose.

There accordingly began, under the eyes of head gardener Monsieur, a transplantation of French manners and customs to this little German country place,

situated where the waters of the Moselle mingle with the Rhine. It was a curious phenomenon, the study of which is full of interest.

The Comte d'Artois had been at Coblenz for a month with his mistress, Madame de Polastron, and was eager to cut a figure: Madame had arrived, accompanied by the loyal, passionately devoted Gourbillon,[1] and the Comtesse de Balbi had resumed her official duties as lady-in-waiting. The leading personages were thus reunited. Monsieur was installed in the right wing of the *château*, the Comte d'Artois and Madame in the left wing; receptions were to be held in the central part.

Money flowed like water. Monsieur had received nearly 700,000 francs out of the fund which had been collected in preparation for the king's flight, and if he were short of money the good elector would provide for his needs. Clement Wenceslas was most generous; he provided food, linen, silver, fuel and servants' wages. The house was soon furnished as sumptuously as could be desired, and etiquette was as strictly observed as in the good old days. Monsieur's daily routine was immutably fixed: *grand lever* at 10 a. m., mass at 11 a. m., dinner at 6 p. m.; at 11 p. m., lemonade and almond juice to ensure a good night's rest.

The princes' court grew larger day by day. It had

[1] The Comte de Provence wrote to his wife: "I was quite sure that Madame de Gourbillon's intelligence and enthusiasm would pull you through."

at first been meagre, consisting only of the attendants of the Comte d'Artois; but Monsieur's departure had created a wave of enthusiasm, and from Paris and from the provinces, aristocrats, royalists by birth or inclination, the vain and the faint-hearted, hurried to the new capital. While with some youth, thoughtlessness, the desire to see the world and to escape from annoyances were the impelling motives, others were animated by considerations of honour, of the sacred duty of stemming the tide of revolution: to these the journey to Coblenz appeared in the light of a moral obligation. Thus all the coats-of-arms of France assembled in the little town with its narrow streets.

On the Green Place and the Rhine embankment, the only thoroughfares wide enough for traffic to pass easily, the inhabitants watched with astonishment a procession of the most heterogeneous vehicles: rustic carts from old country houses, hired carriages, round Court coaches, the shape of which had earned them a vulgar nickname, and travelling *berlines*. It was the Exodus over again. There were old gentlemen dressed in the style of Louis XV's reign, elderly dowagers and young gallants; behind them came valets, ladies' maids and other servants. There were contractors too, tradesmen who had followed their gilded *clientèle* into exile, and the *émigrettes*—dressmakers, perfumers, sellers of knick-knacks, and, of course, *demi-mondaines*.

Officers with powdered hair, smartly uniformed and beribboned, thronged the streets and held forth in the

cafés of the Drei Kronen, the Römische Kaiser and the other inns. Acquaintances met again, heads were counted; those who were not yet there were severely condemned. Men who could not make up their minds to emigrate were to be regarded as having lost their honour, and their former friends would place marks of contempt "on their backs." The young men were drunk with loyal emulation; the earliest arrivals had decided that a corps of genuine loyalists should be formed, only one hundred strong, and that those whose names were not on this roll of honour should be declared unworthy to serve the king. Up the avenue which led to the *château* swarmed crowds of fiery, happy, devoted young nobles, going to pay court to their master.

The impression made on new arrivals was magnificent enough. There were Monsieur's bodyguards in blue coats with gold shoulder-knots, royal blue breeches and high boots: the guards of the Comte d'Artois in green coats with silver lace and crimson collar and facings; horse guards commanded by the Comtes d'Avaray and de Damas; king's dragoons, officers of the Mirabeau and Polignac legions, "red companies," and men of the newly-formed regiments, whose blue coats with *fleurs de lys* on the gold buttons gave them a purely royalist stamp.

The whole thing smacked of the ball-room rather than the battlefield, but new arrivals did not feel this: it seemed to them that the good old days of royal om-

nipotence had come back. They saw themselves returning to their country as masters, making their voices heard and thrashing the *canaille*, re-establishing throne and altar—the coupling of the two words dates from Coblenz—and restoring the old régime in its entirety. This was the miracle wrought by exile. The continual streaming in of new *émigrés*, the life they led cooped up in a little town where they jostled one another and moved continually in the same circle, caused a peculiar mental fermentation: even people who had not previously been blind supporters of absolute monarchy became so now. "No compromise!" they cried in the *café* of the Drei Kronen. One step more, and the chief enemy would be no longer the revolutionaries, but the nobles who tried to make terms with the Revolution, the "*monarchiens*" who stayed in Paris and advised the captive king to accept a constitution—as if the son of St. Louis could tolerate such an invention of the devil!

Monsieur received in the great drawing-room. When he recognised a newcomer, he simply nodded—"Good," or "I am glad to see you again here"—not a word more. Since he had crossed the frontier his character seemed to have acquired a new *hauteur*, his inclinations towards prudent reforms to have been suppressed: the "citizen" in him had flown away along with his tricolour cockade. He forgot his words of wisdom and moderation, and talked almost as the diehards did, like his brother d'Artois, who contemplated an immediate invasion of France. One wonders what

caused this change of tone. Soon after he had reached Mons, he had heard of the Varennes drama. Very possibly he was sincerely affected by it; but whether he wished it or not, that disaster was the beginning of his own political career. Louis XVI having returned to Paris a prisoner, he himself represented, for the time, the free exercise of the royal prerogative.

His entourage encouraged him to take this view of his position. The counsellor and guide of the exiled community was the financier and ex-Minister Calonne, "*l'homme fatal de l'émigration*," a vain, muddle-headed reformer strong in a triple armour of assurance, convinced of his own infallibility and his own good repute. The Comte d'Artois saw everything with his eyes. Monsieur was inclined to distrust him: but Colonne used such fine language, expressed himself so peremptorily, and pointed to a future so rich in promise.

"It is a good thing," he used to say, "that the king is not in a position to govern; he is so weak. His loss of power will make the task of the true royalists easier, and the Revolution will perish by its own excesses."

Under the influence of Calonne Monsieur formed a Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Soon he had representatives in all the capitals: they were unofficial, certainly, and their status was very poor compared to that of the king's ministers, but they only acted through and for Coblenz. He even had at Cologne a Prime Minister *in partibus*, the Marshal de Castries, an honest

and courageous man, but too wedded to red tape methods, an "inferior scribbler"; it was he who conducted the princes' negotiations with the allied Powers, Austria and Prussia. Thus, imperceptibly, a sort of implicit monarchy was created, an extra-territorial monarchy at the head of which stood Monsieur. The times of the *Comité des Sages* had gone for ever.

Coblenz became every day more of a French town. Between June, 1791, and February, 1792, three thousand persons, who had brought with them not only their clothes but their customs as well, settled there. The German citizens cut down their establishments and reduced themselves to the barest necessities to make room for the exiles: for a great deal of money was to be made out of them. The few imposing houses the town could boast were worth their weight in gold: the beauties of the aristocracy were not disposed to haggle, for they wanted to reopen their *salons* and were not inclined to display their charms in too mean a setting. Each week was a string of festivities: the princes received on Tuesday, the Elector on another day, on another Madame de Balbi, or Madame de Polastron. Carousing and gaming went on as they had at Versailles, and those who had left the greater part of their resources behind them were sorely tried.

The honest Elector Clement Wenceslas was delighted with the cheerful extravagance of the exiles, their charming, ornamental way of letting things slide. This invasion of nephews, of clever, witty people

and new fashions brought a little colour into what had till then been a very monotonous life. His sister, Princess Cunegunda, a very plain but kind-hearted old lady who liked a joke, was equally pleased: she had somebody to talk to, assumed a Frenchified air and signed charming little notes with her pet name "Cucu."

It was a festal time indeed. Day and night were one: everything was a source of amusement: there was an unchecked flow of delicacies for the princes' tables. If anyone suggested that the royal exiles' way of life was, in the circumstances, improper, he was ignored as an impudent moraliser. By night, no doubt, the inhabitants of Coblenz regretted the old peaceful days: there were brawls and duels when gentlemen were flushed with wine, and maidens once the pink of modesty strayed from the paths of German virtue. But, after all, all these immigrants had money, and paid up like men.

Every court has its parties, its *coteries*. Coblenz, being now a court, was no exception to the rule. The most frequented *salon*, that which led the fashion, was of course that of the favourite, Madame de Balbi. Monsieur had lodged her in a country house on the way to Schönbornlust. When her duties with Madame were over she went home, where Monsieur awaited her with the rest of their set—Jaucourt, the handsome Jaucourt, nicknamed Clair-de-lune, who had let two of his fingers be cut off by a door to save the honour of a lady he had compromised: Romanzoff, the agent of

Catherine II, Empress of Russia: other noblemen of less importance, and a few quite young men fresh from college, who had come to Coblenz to be trained in the use of weapons.

First the Countess changed her clothes. Everything—chemise, stockings, dress—was put on in public: but she did it so skilfully that, keen as their eyes were, the lads saw no more than if she had been surrounded by a dozen screens. Monsieur presided over the conversation. Seated paternally in an armchair before the fire, his hand on his knobbed stick, he quoted, told stories, as often as not improper ones, and sang old street songs—for he had read everything and remembered all he had read, however trivial—all the time mechanically forcing the point of his stick into his shoe.

But what he liked best of all was to play the schoolmaster. He gave the young men lectures on prosody, on the art of reading, or set them competitions in couplet-writing, and the winner had the honour of receiving a kiss on the forehead. When it grew dark, the Countess had the card-tables brought in, and play went on for hours. Monsieur sat by as umpire, and his shadow on the wall strangely recalled that of Louis XVI, still struggling, far away in Paris, against the Revolution which held him more and more tightly in its grip.

The Comtesse de Balbi did not consider other ladies' feelings, and they did not consider hers. In the *salon*

of Madame de Polastron, whom the Comte d'Artois had installed in Coblenz itself, in the house of the Sieur Grant, the scandals of her life, the sufferings of poor M. de Balbi, who was deceived, could not hold his tongue, and was in a consequence declared insane and shut up, were a fashionable subject of conversation. This was not astonishing; had she not once chaffed the gay ladies in the streets of Versailles?

Now she thought she could do as she pleased, was playing the queen, receiving the young bloods of the *émigration* and ruining Monsieur by her orgies. Madame de Polastron herself did not talk like this. She knew how to conceal her animosity. Gentle, sentimental, unassuming in her manner, she seemed to have no thought but how to keep her lover, the volatile Comte d'Artois. But she made no attempt to check other women's tongues: and there was an underground war between the two *salons*, waged by sly intrigues, all the traditional plotting and contriving which the idle atmosphere of the place encouraged. Everyone delighted in it: in this as in other things, it was Versailles over again. Madame de Balbi was perfectly informed of all that was said about her in the house of Sieur Grant, but it did not trouble her; sure as she was of Monsieur, she knew that all the malicious gossips of Coblenz would be at her feet the same evening.

On top of all, there was the Prince de Condé's party, consisting of the fighting men, those who, like Brennus, would accept only definite, clean-cut solutions

of the problem of the day. Although the Prince had his residence at Worms, where he lived on connubial terms with his old friend, the Princess of Monaco, and her daughter, he had faithful adherents at Coblenz, who spoke in his name. His feelings towards Monsieur had been well known ever since the Favras incident. It was still his opinion that the Comte de Provence was "done for." Monsieur, on the contrary, professed a regard for his cousin. He knew him to be a difficult man to guide. "It is not enough," he said, "to avoid annoying him: one has to please him." Condé, for his part, did as he liked; among a multitude of drawing-room soldiers, he alone had proved his worth and could claim any real experience, and this gave him a definite position. He was head of the army outside France: it would be he who would lead the troops of the *émigrés* to the attack on the Revolution.

These troops were a curious force, without a parallel in military history. Well-to-do *bourgeois* and stern magistrates had come to groan under the weight of their pack; old men like President Bernard marched alongside soldiers under sixteen like the Comte de Neuilly; aristocrats cut wood and went to draw water. There were more officers than other ranks, and one general to every 108 men! They enjoyed camp life, the morning parades in the open air. A smiling future awaited them; they would soon re-enter France and pass the summer in their own country. The good old

times of Louis XV had returned; nobody troubled much about morality, religion, or to put it bluntly, law and order: and foreigners were astonished at the bearing of these military men who had left their country for the sake of God and their king. In Condé's army no words were hard enough for Louis XVI—"a poor sort of fellow, a sham saint"—, for the queen, a "democrat," even for Monsieur, who showed signs of democratic tendencies. The Comte d'Artois was the only Prince whose royalism was above suspicion. In this soil, royalist sectarianism grew as it listed.

There was rivalry between Worms and Coblenz. At Coblenz, there was rivalry between Monsieur and his brother; the women's zealous tongues made these antipathies still keener. D'Avaray quarrelled with the favourite; Madame de Gourbillon told all and sundry that Madame de Balbi was turning the prince's house into a brothel; Madame declared that the Balbi had given her adulterated wine to make her drunk and disgust Monsieur with her. Reckless slanders flew hither and thither; the game was to keep the top of the road and go full tilt. There was discord in the hive: the little band of exiles were eating one another up, and the few who still retained a little common-sense were full of lamentation. "One must have a bed," they said, "before pulling the clothes over one; but things will never be better so long as there is a petticoat left."

On one point, however, Monsieur and his brother

were agreed—the attitude to be adopted towards the king. Since they had arrived at Coblenz, the object of all their endeavours had been to raise Europe against France: they had obtained from Austria and Prussia a solemn declaration in favour of the re-establishment of the monarchy, and so had flung down a challenge to the Revolution. But was not this policy, dependent on foreign support, likely to bring the king to the scaffold? Marie Antoinette had already vainly entreated the Comte d'Artois to abstain from any rash undertakings; and Louis XVI was no more successful with Monsieur. The Comte de Provence was lavish of pretty speeches: d'Artois and he were absolutely united —in their feelings, their principles, and their zeal to serve their brother and sovereign; but nothing would induce them to alter their line of conduct.

It was a poignant drama—the prisoner-king trying to save his life, and his brothers pushing him step by step towards the abyss in the name of their principles. Every approach from the Tuileries was rejected, at first with respect, then with a kind of irony. When Louis XVI asked Monsieur to return to France, he replied: "The king is not free, and we are too faithful subjects to obey orders wrung from him by violence." When this letter was received, the queen cried in anger, "Cain! Cain!", but the king was still for trying persuasion. He sent one of his most devoted servants, the Baron de Goguelat, to Coblenz.

Goguelat arrived one evening at Schönbornlust. He

found a crowd of guards, officers and servants in the ante-rooms—a regal atmosphere, quite different from the Tuileries. He was conducted into the *salon d'honneur* and delivered his letters, in which Louis XVI once more asked his brothers not to raise enemies against France and to resume their place at his side. Monsieur read them; then he said:

"The king does not know what is happening: we will send him an official reply. As for you, I flatter myself that, after ripe reflection, you will ask nothing more than to become one of us."

"Monseigneur, your Highness will pardon me, but I have promised their Majesties to take back your answer to them."

To which Monsieur replied icily:

"In that case, I have just given it to you, and there is nothing to hinder your return."

This was how the envoys of the King of France were received in the new capital.

And as time went on the gulf widened. At the Tuileries, the queen declared that she had no worse enemies that the *émigrés*, that they were the cause of all her troubles, and that if they returned as conquerors she would be subjected to a worse slavery than she was now enduring. "*Il serait pourtant dur d'être sauvé par ce maudit borgne!*" she said referring to Condé. As for Louis XVI, it was his wish that the war should remain a war between Power and Power, and that the *émigrés* should take no part in it: and he laboured

honestly to convert men who had no ears to hear. "*Vous avez des motifs nombreux d'irritation*," he wrote, "*vous avez beaucoup souffert, mais moi ai-je eu d'heureux jours?*"

Commands, prayers, entreaties availed nothing against the obstinacy of Monsieur and his entourage. There was no division of opinion at Coblenz where the king was concerned. He was blamed for his condescension towards scoundrelly *monarchiens* and Jacobins, and he was in worse odour still when it was learnt that he had an ambassador in Russia working in opposition to the princes' schemes. A stop must be put to these goings-on. The king was no better than a minor, he had lost the right to make decisions. It was an insult to the *émigrés* to try to prevent them from taking part in the operations: the Vendée and the Cévennes had taken up arms, and the fine flower of the nobility was to stand aside! It was impossible. They would save the monarchy in spite of the king. Condé, rendered furious by inaction, raged against the whole world—against the Emperor of Austria, whom he termed "a mandarin," against Marie Antoinette, who was at the head of the Austrian Committee in Paris, and so on. Monsieur did not indulge in extravagant language—Fersen declared him to be the only rational being in a nest of odious intrigues: his anger was cold, and he followed step by step the road he had marked out for himself. The voice of the sovereign being stifled by the oppression in which he was

held, he himself was the necessary organ of sovereignty. He wrote to the queen: "There is nothing we desire so much as to act in accordance with your views, but a thousand urgent cases arise in which we have to make a decision on our own account without awaiting your orders." Could an excuse for disobedience be more charmingly framed?

Nevertheless, the good times at Coblenz were over: the pleasant conversations, the delight of living in freedom and peace of mind, had been but a passing boon. Only the wise had understood that this new life required a firm basis—a basis which was lacking. The summer passed; it became clear that Monsieur would not finish it at Brunoy, as he had been told he would. Winter came, and everyone left Schönbornlust for Coblenz. Monsieur laid down the law as of old, and told stories, forcing the point of his stick into his shoe, but that did nothing to advance matters.

And what was more serious, money was getting short. Old gentlemen, dowagers and young gallants had to perform miracles of ingenuity to maintain their position; everyone borrowed as best he could, and the tradesmen abandoned their insolvent customers. The princes, for their part, were seriously embarrassed; the courts of Naples and Russia grew tired of paying, and as events took a turn unfavourable to the *émigrés*, the sympathy felt for them evaporated. "The princes' affairs are going badly," the Queen of Naples said, "they will probably become a charge on us." Indeed,

at the beginning of 1792, they had funds "for a fortnight only." The scale of their establishment required 100,000 francs daily, and the loan of two millions guaranteed by Austria had not obtained what they expected of it. An appeal was made to their loyal followers: Madame de Vergennes pledged her diamonds, mortgages were given on assets which existed only in the future. The community which six months ago had been so exclusive now became mixed; dubious characters—money-lenders, even Jacobin spies—made their appearance one by one in the little town.

If only the foreign Powers had remained well-disposed, things would not have been so bad. But the disorderly gatherings, the ever-growing invasion of undisciplined officers, aroused their uneasiness. Once, in the hope of re-entering France at the head of the coalition, the *émigrés* had been willing to be clothed, curled and booted in Prussian style: but that was long ago. Now they had learned to know their allies of a day. Now the two camps regarded one another with mistrust, if not hatred; the young Goethe, "so proud of his Olympian attitudes," could not forgive the French gentlemen for thinking him a boorish German.

Austria concealed her hand no longer. She detested the *émigrés* and refused to help them. She would not allow the princes any say in affairs: they could have what they could get or nothing. Why should they be treated with consideration? Their help was useless, even dangerous: the Powers alone would decide

the fate of France. Even Clement Wenceslas had lost his enthusiasm. He had taken stock of the enormous wastage in his establishment, due to the *émigrés;* eight hundred dozen napkins and a hundred silver table services had disappeared! Where had they all gone? He might, perhaps, have been willing to go on paying, if that had been all. But there was, further, unrest in the country; the inhabitants of some of the villages now refused to admit foreigners: and the worthy elector began to lament the presence of his nephews and their train.

One day, however, news came which made them believe that all was over: it was reported that the king had fled for the second time, and this time made his escape. The manner in which the tidings were received shows how amazingly mercurial, how volatile the whole community was, both French and German. All quarrels ceased instantly: there was a general reconciliation; everyone was, as it were, intoxicated with joy. All Coblenz rushed to meet the princes: they were jostled, crushed, embraced, in defiance of all etiquette. The Elector was cheered too: and the old princess Cunegunda, for her part, had the experience of her life: "she was kissed over and over again." Next day, the news was proved to be false; and everything relapsed into the old rut.

Condé's army was but the ghost of itself: *bourgeois*, magistrates, gentlemen, clad in rags, without a morsel

of bread or a roof to cover them, tramped the roads, reduced to beggary, and treated everywhere like wandering Jews. When Monsieur gave those who were in the sorest need 25 louis from his private purse, it was a windfall, for 25 louis was a large sum even for the master of Schönbornlust. The Germans could not understand why the men did not desert, why they stayed and manœuvred, pack on back, in such an inclement winter. "You had good pay in France," they said; "you ought not to have given it up." But these were the base words of mercenaries who did not understand the power that lies in honour, in devotion to an idea. The young French *émigré* "read a chapter of Bayard for his morning prayers": that was the fundamental difference between him and the Duke of Brunswick's soldiers.

Prolonged negotiations were required to induce the Powers not to expel the whole community of necessitous aristocrats. It was much harder still for them to obtain commissions in a foreign army. Monseiur had asked in vain for an honorary rank, a title which would place him on a footing of equality with the sovereigns. Nor were the authorities inclined to incorporate his men in battalions which were preparing to invade France. At last the allies, having the game in their hands, consented. Condé's men were to be included, divided into three groups, in the Duke of Brunswick's army corps. It was clearly understood between the Austrian and Prussian leaders that under

no pretext should the French be placed in the forefront of the battle.

Nothing could more perfectly illustrate the naïveté of the *émigrés* than their attitude in the matter. It never occurred to them that they were being enrolled for reasons of policy, to keep them from grumbling. They were wild with enthusiasm. "You will see!" they said to their comrades, men moulded in Frederick II's barracks, "there will be plenty of everything—money and food. France is waiting for us." They forgot the misery of the present, the marches without food or shelter at night. These country squires who had left their lands did not for one moment dream of diminishing their fatherland; they had no notion that they might seem in the eyes of historians to have played an odious part. They were ready to die for the watchword invented for all time by Coblenz, "throne and altar."

Monsieur followed the advance of the army from afar; his importance compelled him to be a spectator. In the earliest days of the campaign the allies had the upper hand, and the first exchanges of shots made a painful impression on him. "My heart is torn," he said, "for I cannot hide from myself the fact that Frenchmen have been beaten, that Frenchmen are running away." It is pleasant to record words like these; they extenuate many errors. In this conflict between patriot and prince, the prince without doubt had the last word.

It could not well be otherwise; no other feeling is so strong as that of divine right. But what then seemed to be a sign of weakness in him was one day to be noted to his credit.

The campaign of 1792, which had been so light-heartedly begun, came abruptly to a standstill in sight of the windmills of Valmy; Brunswick admitted defeat and retired. The *émigrés* had not taken part in the battle, but the horrors of the retreat were not spared them. They went barefoot, dying of hunger, reading at the cross-roads notices forbidding them to remain, while the Prussians jeered at them; "where are the Frenchmen," they asked, "who were going to receive us with open arms?" The demoralised army became a prey to misery and panic: there was a hue and cry after it.

The leaders tried in vain to maintain a dignified bearing. Condé, accused by Brunswick of lying, replied sharply and was put under arrest like a common soldier; but when Brunswick threatened to disarm his men he cried: "Then you will have to kill them to the last man." This display of noble pride had no effect on his foreign allies, whose sole idea was at all costs to get the *émigrés* out of his Majesty's dominions.

Meantime the new era, which Goethe had foretold in his bivouac in the Argonne, began to dawn. Worms, Speyer and Mainz were taken by the French armies, and Coblenz was threatened. Hardly had Monsieur

returned when the alarmed inhabitants rebelled against his presence, and he had to leave the town.

The Powers, ashamed at having been beaten by unknown generals and undisciplined troops, continued to place the responsibility on the *émigrés* who had dragged them into the disastrous adventure. "These people are like the plague," the Russian Ambassador said. "Wherever they go they bite the hand that feeds them." It would not have taken much to make the Powers order their decimation.

Then Monsieur showed that he had in him the stuff of a king, who knew how to shepherd his people and direct its policy. When everyone else had lost his head, he kept his *sang-froid*, and did not fly into a passion like the Comte d'Artois, who used to strike his officers. He pursued a cautious policy and endeavoured to cope with the most pressing necessities. "The hare has abandoned all," he wrote in his precious style: "the weasel was very angry with him, but he had to retire none the less." The hare and the weasel were the Austro-Prussian allies.

Not knowing where to pass the winter, he marched towards Liége, the only safe route, picking up money where and how he could. He sent 12,000 *livres* to Condé, having "heard that he was hard up." He thought no longer of his own private difficulties—the impossibility of paying butcher or baker, the carriages seized at the request of his creditors, the imprisonment of the Comte d'Artois for debt at Maestricht: the lack

of money "either to travel or to stay anywhere." Far from indulging in recrimination against the allies who were maltreating the nobility of France, he preached submission. "The Powers," he said, "whose efforts in favour of our cause, and the benefits conferred on us, we must not forget, demand for the time our separation and disarmament." An astonishing example of self-control, patience and firmness in the face of ill-fortune.

Others bore themselves less admirably. "The princes should be on their guard against assassins," one of Condé's friends wrote to him, and Condé replied, "Do not be alarmed. Princes without armies, Bourbons with no nobility around them, are such nullities that they are not worthy of the honour of assassination."

CHAPTER III

THE GENTLEMAN OF VERONA

MONSIEUR had taken refuge at Hamm, in Westphalia, a poor village where the King of Prussia had been kind enough to permit him to reside. He lived in a very rough wooden house, a sort of Trappe. The ladies had gone elsewhere—the Comtesse de Provence to Turin in charge of the Gourbillon, who was imperceptibly exchanging the rôle of servant for that of mistress, while Madame de Balbi, the "Trappe" being too gloomy a place of residence for a lady of her type, had satisfactorily replaced it by Brussels.

From Hamm Monsieur followed the progress of the Terror. It was there that he learned of the condemnation of Louis XVI. What were his feelings when he heard the news? Had he a revulsion of feeling, did he ask himself whether he, as chief among the *émigrés*, was not in a way responsible for his brother's tragic end? The only document we have to judge him by is his Declaration. After proclaiming his nephew the Dauphin King of France and himself

assuming the title of Regent, he exclaimed: "To avenge the blood of the king my brother, to break the bonds in which my family are held, to replace my nephew on the throne and restore to my country its ancient constitution—that is the sole object of my ambition!" His only idea now was the complete re-establishment of the *ancien régime:* his own misfortunes and the success of the Revolution had made him more reactionary, had driven him back to the pure monarchical tradition. The last phrases of his Declaration were to be, with a few variations according to circumstances, the *Leitmotiv* of his whole period of exile.

Regent of France! A fine title, but the allies refused to recognise it, and in a German village it had but little resonance. The days passed, burying Monsieur in oblivion, but he was quite unaware of it; for whole days on end he wrote in his slender, neat little handwriting, free from erasures and irreproachably straight, to the chancelleries, to his Ministers, to his loyal French subjects. He was going, he said, to send to them his brother or Condé's son, the Duc de Bourbon. "You will soon see the plume of one of Henri IV's grandsons floating in your midst." Marie Antoinette was guillotined: straightway he issued a new proclamation to the *émigrés:* "The horrible murder which has just ended the days of the queen, my sister-in-law". . . Letters, notes, proclamations, all reached their destinations with difficulty or not at all; the

regent, however, believed that he was speaking to Europe and France, and that the royalists were taking their orders from Hamm.

The Lyons insurrection had aroused the highest hopes, but the town had again fallen into the hands of the Republicans. There still remained Toulon, which had declared for the king. Monsieur did not hesitate; he would dash to Toulon and thence raise the South. He said goodbye to his brother and travelled post-haste from the depths of Germany to Leghorn; he was already hurrying on his preparations for sailing when he learned that Toulon had fallen. What should he do? Where should he go? His father-in-law, the King of Sardinia, would not be pleased to see him at Turin; that monarch already found the presence of Madame and the outcries of the Gourbillon a sufficient burden. The Emperor of Austria did not allow Frenchmen to settle in Lombardy. After some negotiations, Russia and Spain secured for Monsieur a refuge at Verona, in the dominions of Venice.

In May, 1794, the Vice-Podestà of Verona was informed by the State Inquisitor of Venice, Agostino Barbarigo, that the regent of France would arrive shortly, travelling under the name of the Comte de Lisle. He was to be received with respect, but not as a person of royal blood, and without honours, as the title of regent was not recognised: the attitude of impartiality adopted by the Most Serene Republic was to be kept strictly in view. Further, the Count's stay

would be short; he was awaiting a reply to despatches sent to Madrid and Vienna.

About midnight on May 24 a carriage stopped before the Due Torri inn, in the heart of the city, quite close to the charming Piazza delle Signorie, framed in palaces. By the light of torches, the regent stepped out, followed by d'Avaray and three gentlemen. The inn-keeper and the officers sent by the Podestà were at once struck by the gloomy, melancholy expression on the Northerners' faces: they did not know, perhaps, how good life was under an Italian sky. Monsieur hardly replied to the profuse complimentary speeches with which he was welcomed; he was ill, disappointed, worn out with fatigue.

An inn offered but mediocre hospitality; but he had to be content with it during his first days in Verona. Nevertheless, the expense threatened to be too heavy for the prince's exchequer, and d'Avaray went out to look for a house to let. The Podestà, obedient to the orders he had received, gave him no help of any kind, for this would have meant his becoming involved in the affairs of the pseudo-regent.

One day, by good luck, d'Avaray discovered a little country house, in a very secluded, solitary position in a suburb of Verona, not far from the Capucin Convent. The front of the house was covered with greenery: there was a garden all round, and the neighbourhood was perfectly quiet; the air was sweet with the convent bells. He was charmed with the house, and

as the owner proved reasonable, the Casa Gazzola was rented next day in the name of the Comte de Lisle. Of course it was not a palace, although the term, in Italy, is benevolently applied to the most insignificant buildings; it was the classic out-of-town "casino," simple in style, with ivy and clematis climbing over the walls. There was no furniture; they had to apply to a Jew, who procured them some. At last, however, Monsieur was able to enter into possession with his favourite, his Minister for Foreign Affairs Flachslanden, two secretaries, the Sieur Colon, a surgeon, and four servants. The other members of his suite were lodged in the town, at the Due Torri, the Tre Gobbi, and the Casa Pradavalle.

They led a very simple, indeed a frugal life, painful for a connoisseur of table delicacies like Monsieur; but the most rigid economy was necessary. He consoled himself by establishing a kind of cheap ceremony. In the morning, there was the *lever;* he was dressed, had his decorations put on and his sword buckled to his waist. Thus adorned, he sat down in his armchair, read the French newspapers and dictated one letter after another.

It would be an error to imagine him admiring the arenas, gleaming ruddy in the sunshine, or taking lessons in politics at the tomb of Can Grande della Scala, who was tyrant of Verona in very ancient times —barbaric times, as people of taste, who had a horror of everything Gothic, used to say in Monsieur's day.

He hardly ever went for a walk, except in his garden, or on the roads, with a slender escort, and this very seldom. He was only once seen in Verona itself: he watched a horse-race from the windows of the Palazzo Marioni. He knew his orders—to do nothing which could endanger the hospitality offered to him by the Most Serene Republic. But on Sundays he made amends and reassumed his royal dignity; he went in state to hear mass at the Capucins, and when he left the church, the *émigrés* came to kiss his hands before he received them in audience at the Casa Gazzola.

These *émigrés* were not very numerous. Still, by degrees, the loyal subjects of the Bourbons had made their way to Verona. Since it was impossible to serve the little king who was pining away in the tower of the Temple, they had, with the greatest difficulty, quieted their consciences by joining the only representative of the monarchy who was at liberty; they lived in his atmosphere, and that sufficed them. Noblemen, almost penniless and encumbered with families, were to be met with in Verona: such as the Marquis d'Auxonne, who lodged in the Contrada di San Carlo with his wife of twenty-seven and five children. They earned their living precariously, giving French lessons, entering the families of Italian aristocrats as tutors and receiving assistance from them. There were few distractions: there was the café for the men, but even the café was too dear, and the regent could not think of keeping up a court. So they went and gossipped

at the dressmaker's, but they were not favourably regarded there, they were such bad payers: and the washerwomen refused to wash their linen because they would only give "five *sous* for a shirt, cuffs included."

Notwithstanding—which astounded the Podestà Alvise Morcenigo—they displayed none of the ill-humour or depression which might have been expected of them in the circumstances; they were light-hearted and cheerful, ready to put a favourable interpretation on every event and see substance in every shadow. Of an evening they foregathered in the rooms of some one of the community, visited the ladies, and laid in a stock of anecdotes with which to entertain the regent; or else they gave concerts. In short, they were agreeable people, and some of the Veronese nobles were pleased at the unexpected invasion of the place by the French nobility; it livened up the little town which slept, and still sleeps, in a loop of the Adige.

The regent, however, was still melancholy. It was clear that Europe took no account of him; despite the voluminous correspondence which Flachslanden carried on with the Chancelleries in his name, he received nothing but fair words. The Austrian archdukes who passed through Verona treated him with marked disdain. His *amour-propre* had received a serious blow from another quarter. Madame de Balbi at Brussels, deprived of the consolation of Monsieur's wit, had sought for some tangible support. This took the form of the Comte Archambaud de Périgord, and some time

afterwards "the new Phædra of forty" unobtrusively brought twin boys into the world.

Her patron having in the meantime become regent, she thought of resuming her place at his side, and wrote to Verona, in the most natural way in the world, that the air of Italy had been strongly recommended by her doctors. But d'Avaray had been warned; he had detested the favourite ever since the time at Coblenz, narrated her recent history to his master, and ended by saying:

"If Madame de Balbi sets foot in this house I go next day. Your reputation before everything, your favour afterwards."

During d'Avaray's speech the regent went first red and then pale.

"Oh, my friend," he said, "do not make things too hard for me! Leave me, for pity's sake. I must be alone."

And there, in the shabby drawing-room of the Casa Gazzola, with its second-hand furniture, the regent of France wept. He knew, of course, that she was thoughtless and capricious: he had often rebuked her for it. "Cæsar's wife must be above suspicion," he had said; to which she replied, "You are not Cæsar by any means, and you know quite well that I have never been your mistress." She was constitutionally disrespectful, but she had such charm, such wit; he had grown accustomed to feel her presence close to him—for thirteen years now. . . . He looked back

on the happy days at Brunoy, the little house at Versailles; the billiard-room, the drawing-room and its card tables. She would have enlivened his gloomy existence at Verona, brought a little gaiety into the uneasy atmosphere. But he must put the thought aside; d'Avaray was right, his dignity compelled it. So, with tears in his eyes, he made the sacrifice; he broke with the habit of years and thrust out of his life the only charm it possessed.

Madame de Balbi tried to resist; she sent the letter of dismissal back to the regent with the words, "Surely this letter cannot be from you." But d'Avaray was on the lookout, and the ex-favourite was warned that any letters from her would be torn up unread. The regent could not bring himself to utter the name of his mistress, but he had to give vent to his feelings somehow and the confidante he chose was his wife, who was living in penury at Turin, begging of the king her father a little wood and coal to keep her from dying of cold. "*L'amitié ne doit pas s'effaroucher des erreurs de l'amour*," he wrote, "*mais quand ces erreurs ont un éclat tel qu'il blesse l'honneur, ce même honneur exige qu'on lui sacrifie jusqu'à l'amitié même.*"

In the meantime, Venice began to feel uneasy, for the Comte de Lisle showed no sign of leaving. "How his prolonged stay weighs on our minds!" cried the State Inquisitor, a correct official afraid of responsibility. On the one hand, the unwelcome guest must not be allowed to involve the Republic in any diffi-

culties; on the other hand, his safety must be secured. Despatches were exchanged daily between the Inquisitor and the Podestà; the road from Verona to Venice was traversed by a stream of couriers; the whole policy of the Council was centred in a fat man who sat in a country villa weeping for his lost mistress. Whole strings of orders were issued. The noblemen of Verona must be forbidden to associate with the *émigrés:* an endeavour must be made to get rid of the poorest *émigrés:* all collections on their behalf must be prevented: the Frenchmen must not be allowed to receive the Sacrament from the Veronese clergy: a close watch must be kept on the entourage of the Comte de Lisle, reports on his *moral* sent in, agents recruited from among his household. In short, the Podestà must know everything without seeming to.

The Podestà sweated blood to satisfy "his honoured lords." He bribed one of the valets, interrogated the kitchen menials; as the servants sometimes acted as secretaries to their masters—"what an indiscretion!" the prudent Italian noted—some information could be obtained from them. He drew the portraits of the inhabitants of the Casa Gazzola. The Comte was sometimes taciturn, always lazy, insensitive, a lover of food and leisurely chat; he did not seem to understand his position. Flachslanden was a man of some ability, but weak, anxious above all to keep his master's favour: Jaucourt had been entrusted with a task beyond his capacity; Cossé was an old-

style courtier, Damas a brave soldier, d'Avaray reckless but plucky. Nor were the underlings forgotten. The faithful body servant Péronnet spent ten times his monthly earnings on women. The surgeon Colon, on the contrary, was the most fearful miser imaginable; the almoner a double-faced fellow who cared for nothing but his own interests and sowed discord. The other men-servants were rogues, good at listening at keyholes during the meetings of the Council—for the regent had his Council—but rogues who lived with women, dissolute, irreligious knaves. "It would be a good thing," the Podestà wrote, "if the kitchen could be assembled once a week and taught its duty towards God."

And what a lot of trouble all these people caused! The Comte had got it into his head that he must leave the Casa Gazzola and go and live in the house of the *cavaliere* Verita Poeta, in the most frequented part of the town; he could amuse himself there by looking out of the window. How could this be prevented? "Tell the *cavaliere* Poeta not to let at any price," the Inquisitor replied by express messenger. There were fresh alarms daily—an *émigré*, "a merchant and man of letters," who wanted to have a tragedy printed dealing with the death of Louis XVI, the arrival of a French dentist whose wife, a *Marseillaise*, had too quick eyes. . . .

The foreigners who had suddenly descended on the easy-going province had caused a kind of revolution.

And the trouble was that they had to be protected. Three agents in plain clothes—for "a guard of honour would be inadmissible"—were continually on the watch near the house, and at night there were three patrols. In the glorious days of Can Grande della Scala the Comte de Lisle would probably have been got rid of with exemplary rapidity: but the advance of enlightenment no longer permitted such methods, and the police of Verona were on the lookout.

It had need to be. One morning the Podestà called on d'Avaray and told him, in strict privacy, the following story:

"There is a washerwoman named Angela Gagliardi, who lives in a remote alley. A man came into her shop and asked, 'Is it you who do the Comte de Lisle's washing?' She replied that it was she, and showed him, with some pride, several pairs of silk stockings bearing the Comte's monogram. 'This pair is not properly washed,' the man said in broken Italian mixed with French, 'one can see the marks of the shoes. They ought not to be dirty just there!' Gagliardi, who considers herself a good washerwoman, replied that she did not care to use water containing lime because it injured the material. 'If you like,' the man said, 'I will teach you the secret of perfect washing.' Gagliardi accepted with enthusiasm and offered to pay. 'I will tell you my secret later on for nothing,' he replied. They went on talking, using signs instead of words when necessary. The man be-

came a customer and came to see her every third day about noon. 'If you become a good workwoman,' he said, 'I will take you under my protection and some day you will be a great lady in Paris. For the present I can secure you the favour of the Comte de Lisle, who is very particular about his clothes.'

"Gagliardi," the Podestà continued, "is a simple soul. The foreigner, dressed like a gentleman (*vestito da signore*), in a green dragoon's coat, black waistcoat, and a three- cornered hat with a white cockade, with legs and feet as graceful as a dancer's, tall and fine-mannered, made a great impression on her; but what charmed her most of all was that he wore two watches with charms on the chains and called her Madame. She let him come without fear, for although he always chose a time when she was alone, he behaved very well; besides, she was very eager to learn the famous secret. He was quite open with her about his own affairs; he admitted to her that he had fled from France disguised as a priest and had lived for a long time outside the walls of Verona. 'You are not deceiving me?' she said to him one day. He replied by offering her, as a pledge of his veracity, a purse filled with louis d'or; she had never seen such a thing before. Gagliardi is an honest women; she refused it, but henceforward she had the greatest respect for the foreigner: he was certainly a man who was concerned with important affairs. And so he was.

"One day, when she was urging him to keep his promise and tell her the infallible recipe, he suddenly changed his tone. 'Washing stockings, indeed!' he cried. 'What I mean to do is to kill the Comte.' Gagliardi nearly fainted, but managed to contain herself. 'If you are brave,' the man went on, 'you will be a great lady. If you betray me, you are a dead woman.' She promised never to utter a word, and he continued: 'This is what you are to do. Before you take the washing back to the Casa Gazzola, pour on to the Comte's stockings the potion which I will give you. You will reach the gate about eleven, when the Comte is walking in the garden. He will ask you what you want: you will open your parcel and unroll the stockings before him, holding them as near his face as possible. The Comte will feel unwell: then you will fling the rest of the potion in his face, and when he faints, you will put this pill into his mouth. Then you will call for help: people will come, and you will weep and make a scene.'

"The man gave the washerwoman a little glass phial and a black pill, and said, as he went out, 'If you regret having listened to me, I will find someone to take your place.' Gagliardi was left more dead than alive; 'her blood ran cold,' she told me: then, seeing herself already murdered, she thought of throwing herself into the Adige. At length, having recovered her self-possession, she tried the potion on a chicken, and the chicken died on the spot. Then she could

bear it no longer; she ran to her confessor, the Reverend D. Gualfardo, Vicar-General, and told him everything. The confessor ordered her to tell the police without delay.

"I have just seen Gagliardi," the Podestà concluded: "she brought with her the phial, the pill and the dead chicken."

D'Avaray was terrified. He knew, of course, that his master's life was threatened: as long ago as July, 1793, the Venetian Ambassador at Turin had reported the presence of French emissaries who were on the track of members of the Royal Family, and "had infamous intentions with regard to them." But the menace was closer than he had thought. Some days before, the regent, on rising from table, had felt severe pains. Was it poison beginning to work? It was agreed between d'Avaray and the Podestà that nothing should be said to the Comte de Lisle and that the case should be investigated in secret.

The Venetian police have, throughout the centuries, acquired a first-class reputation: but in this case they failed to justify it. Gagliardi, her husband and her servant were rigorously examined. The unfortunate washerwoman told all she knew. Oh yes, she would know the man. She saw him before her so clearly that if she could paint, she could do his portrait from memory! He had a freckle on the cheekbone, another near one ear, black hair, not powdered, and a sky-blue lining to his hat. . . .

She was unobtrusively conducted about the town. One day, at a choral mass at the church of Saint Anastasia, she suddenly gave a shudder when the *Dies vice* was being sung; he was there, with a man in a wig, but he was lost in the crowd. Then a trap was arranged at Gagliardi's house; but in vain. The servants at the Casa Gazzola were minutely examined, without anything suspicious being discovered; to be on the safe side, however, two men-servants indicated by the Podestà were dismissed, and the conduct of the establishment made stricter. Hitherto the tradesmen had had free access to the kitchen and could lay their hands on anything that might be on the table; henceforth the door was closed to them.

Happily, Monsieur was now in perfect health, but perhaps the attempt had only been postponed, and the Podestà was half dead with anxiety. He said to d'Avaray, in the tone of vehement conviction peculiar to the Italians:

"The Comte ought to travel. A change of air would be so good for his health!"

D'Avaray replied: "I would certainly advise him to do so, but at the moment we have less than 1,000 sequins. The Jew Calotti is to send us 40,000 from the Comte d'Artois, but we shall not get far with that."

So the Casa Gazzola kept its tenants. A general exasperation against them began to make itself felt. The clergy feared that the French would pervert the

Italian families with which they associated; the doctors complained of the competition of the prince's surgeon; and official functionaries saw with terror a storm brewing: the French Republic was displeased that its friend the Republic of Venice should offer hospitality to the tyrant's brother!

On June 24, 1795, two horsemen from Condé's army, covered with dust, riding at top speed, arrived before the Casa Gazzola. A few minutes later the regent entered d'Avaray's room, his face full of emotion. There was a moment's silence; then the Comte said:

"The king is dead."

Louis XVII had expired in the Temple on June 8.

D'Avaray flung himself on his knees and kissed his master's hand.

"Sire, now there will be an end to this period of disasters and crimes, and you will restore France."

The King embraced him. The *émigrés* hurried to the house and hailed his Majesty Louis XVIII.

The Podestà had already been informed, and as the Republic of Venice had decided not to recognise the regent's new title, he reminded him that all manifestations which might conflict with the prudent policy of the Government should be avoided. Louis XVIII did not need to be warned twice; externally he remained the Comte de Lisle, without insignia, suite and pomp —a simple gentleman of Verona. But at the Casa Gazzola he was king, and took pleasure in a domestic

majesty. The etiquette of the *lever* and *coucher* was made stricter; the ceremonial of the establishment rose a degree above low-water mark.

At the same time, the whole tenor of life at the Casa Gazzola changed. The torpor which had made the court at Verona the temple of boredom gave place of a sudden to a feverish activity. The king was preparing a public manifesto to France and Europe; he was about to notify the Powers of "his accession to a bloodstained throne." Everyone set to work in a state of frenzied exaltation. There would be no quarter for the murderers of Louis XVI, or for those whose ill-treatment had caused the death of the young Louis XVII. Nor would there be any pardon for those who had not followed their master into exile; their wives would be publicly whipped: while the purchasers of State property, the despoilers of France, would be shot. With 44,000 heads less, the fatherland would be purified.

D'Avaray recommended these vigorous methods, entirely academic as they were: for what could the King of Verona, as the men of the Directory scornfully called him, do? The *émigrés*, however, found a kind of pleasure in this debauch of the imagination, these hopes of reprisals, and Louis XVIII did not this time recall them to a saner view of the situation. On the other hand he let himself be carried away by them, and his manifesto cannot be reckoned a monument of wisdom. In it he spoke of the necessity of re-establish-

ing the government which had been the delight of the French for fourteen centuries, and formally excluded the regicides from his clemency, but said nothing about the purchasers of State property. He lectured his subjects, paraphrasing the Scriptures for their benefit. "You were unfaithful to the God of your fathers, and God, rightly angered, has made you feel the full burden of his wrath."

This manifesto was condemned by all not under d'Avaray's influence as a piece of stupidity—nay worse, of criminal folly. Artois himself, who was far from being commonsense incarnate and was narrow-minded enough, thought the threat to the regicides most unfortunate. "They ought to have been shown," he said, "that they can buy their pardon by the nature and importance of the services they can render." But Louis XVIII was no longer regent; his accession to the throne had made his prejudices, weakened by misfortune and by the necessity of yielding to circumstances, as strong as ever.

The Podestà's uneasiness was not dispelled. His agents reported to him that lights were burning all night in the Casa Gazzola, that ceaseless writing was going on, and that even the men-servants were employed in the copying of documents. Flachslanden was immediately warned that the Comte's manifesto might on no account be printed at or dated from Verona. Here was a new difficulty to be overcome. The king submitted; his manifesto was printed secretly

at Parma by Bodoni, the leading Italian printer, and dated from Turin. But the troubles of the Venetian Republic were not over.

Since June 24, a steady stream of *émigrés* had flowed into Verona. They arrived in parties, counted by police agents at the town gates. There were couriers from Condé's army carrying notes addressed to His Most Christian Majesty; British and Russian Ministers accredited to the said Majesty's Court; French gentlemen like MM. de Castries, de Guiche and de Brissac; and an Irish lady who was said to be either the king's mistress or his daughter, which no one precisely knew.

The despatches were now innumerable. The authorities did not dare to open them on their arrival or departure; the black cabinet, strange to say, did not function at Verona: but a careful watch was kept on them. The road to Casa Gazzola, once so quiet, was now trodden by numbers of people bound for great conferences being held there. What was going on? Despite the trained watchers who had their eyes on the Comte, it was difficult to "penetrate the mysteries," and the Podestà was reduced to bewildering conjectures. How could the penniless prince order a quantity of fine clothes from the tailor Pietro Valinesi, or, from the furniture-maker, *"un lit noble pour l'usage d'une personne de grande importance"?* For it was commonly known that the Jew who had furnished the house had gone to ask for his money and had been

most politely refused. The Comte really seemed to have lost his head.

What the Podestà did not know was that the king, at that very moment, was having inquiries made for a white horse for his coronation day, that he was ordering his agent in Paris, Lemaître, to send to Verona "the books used at the coronation of Louis XIV, Louis XV and Louis XVI, and Godefroy's *Cérémonial Français*," or, if he could not obtain them, to have them secretly copied in a library. Was Louis XVIII going to return to France?

He really believed that he was. The situation had never seemed to him more favourable.

He had long hesitated to put his trust in the Vendée. He had been told, "there are 200,000 armed men there fighting the Revolution under the orders of M. de Gaston." But who was M. de Gaston? and was it for the king's sake that the peasants were in revolt? Nothing seemed less certain. In his mistrust, he had asked for enlightenment.

"There is no M. de Gaston among us," the Royalist commanders had replied. "A man called Gaston, a wig-maker, was killed at the beginning of the insurrection, but no nobleman of the name."

The regent—he was not then entitled to the name —temporised, for he was no lover of prompt, vigorous decisions. The Bishop of Arras said to him:

"The flock of sheep, compelled by necessity, must become a flock of lions."

"I could not become a lion," he sighed from the depths of his armchair.

Then, imperceptibly, he had gained confidence. Languedoc, Provence, and above all Brittany contained a whole people devoted to his cause and headed by true leaders of men. M. de Charette—the *La Charette* who so puzzled the Podestà agents—had taken up arms again and wrote to Verona that he hoped soon to crush the Republican troops. At the beginning of 1795, the regent informed him that he was about to join the Royalists in the Vendée, "to share their glory and associate his name with their triumph." He was to leave Verona secretly and embark on board a Spanish frigate, which would land him on the coast of Poitou, whence he could make his way to his faithful subjects.

Hopes ran high: d'Avaray already saw his master at the head of the Vendée insurrection. Others were less imaginative. The favourite having wittily recalled that Charles VII, when he set out to reconquer his kingdom, was accompanied by a Maid (*La Pucelle*), a sceptic had remarked in low voice:

"S'il ne s'agit que d'une pucelle, nous sommes sûrs de la victoire; j'en connais deux: la femme du roi et son épée." [1]

The sceptic was right. For the safe conduct of the king, Spain was necessary; and at that very moment

[1] "If all that is wanted is a virgin, we are sure of victory; I know two—the king's wife and his sword."

she was treating for peace with France, was making terms with the Revolution. Everything had to be planned over again.

The new King of France had had a bad fall: but while his followers indulged in recriminations, he reflected. What sort of a figure was he cutting alongside his brother d'Artois? Artois had taken refuge in England and was planning a landing on the French coast. Men praised his ardour, his youthful fire; he was the true king; he did not retreat from the path he had chosen; he had given himself body and soul to his army of *émigrés*, which an English fleet was to land in Brittany. Artois! he was the hope of the monarchy, as in the Versailles days. If the Royalist party was in low water, it was due to the king's inactivity. Condé said it straight out with soldierly bluntness. "Henri IV sits doing nothing at Verona," he said in effect.[1]

Louis XVIII guessed that these things were being said. Too intelligent not to estimate his exiled royalty at its true value, he felt deeply the unworthiness of his existence: he knew himself to be a caricature of a sovereign shut up in an Italian country house. If he had read Dante—but that poet was uncongenial to his well regulated, placid nature—he might have remembered the splendid lines, "How hard it is to mount and descend the staircases of others!" His preoccupation was of a different nature, and might have

[1] The exact phrase used by Condé does not bear translation.

been summed up thus—was he to allow his younger brother to bring him home?

"It would be a good thing," someone wrote to him from France, "if the king were to show himself in Vendée or with the *émigrés*' army: his presence would be decisive in favour of the counter-revolution. Popular opinion has quite swung round, the Republican troops are deserting, and the Vendée will be the Alexander who will cut the Gordian knot."

Were these words only a courtier's compliment? Not at all, for the Comte d'Antraigues, the king's agent at Venice, confirmed them.

D'Antraigues was a strange personality, the biggest scamp unhung according to d'Avaray: he was married to an actress, the Saint-Huberti, and since the death of Louis XVII had become a devoted adherent of the Comte de Provence. This polyglot adventurer had a singular capacity for turning people's heads, and the king's was not strong enough to resist him. D'Antraigues formed an espionage bureau on his behalf in Paris. Five persons, very well intentioned but mutually hostile, gave one another misleading information, and d'Antraigues spread the most brilliant prospects before the monarch's eyes. Louis XVIII was dazzled, and, in his enthusiasm, went so far as to adorn the Saint-Huberti's ample bosom with the ribbon of the Order of St. Michael.

The tone of his letters was no longer the same; the adventurer, who was later to betray his master and

deliver his secrets into the hands of Bonaparte, had given him an access of courage. The men who were fighting for him had never seen him. Well, by God's grace, they would see him! But how could he return to France? Perhaps he did not know himself. However that may have been, he made visible preparations for departure: he had "a waggon fit to carry a large quantity of furniture" made; there was activity at the Casa Gazzola: the cook was ordered not to lay in stores for more than a day at a time. "At last the moment has come!" the Podestà cried. To be more accurately informed of what was going on in the Comte's house, he bribed d'Avaray's secretary with little presents, such as a pair of stockings and shoe-buckles.

On August 12, 1795, the news of the Quiberon disaster reached Verona. Imprisoned like rats on the narrow peninsula, clinging desperately to the rocks, the *émigrés* landed by the British squadron and the 30,000 Bretons with their priests, their women and children, their flocks and their holy vessels, had been cut to pieces or driven into the sea by Hoche's army. Was treason or cowardice the cause of the disaster? At Verona nothing definite was known so far. D'Avaray, now a sick man and given to bursts of anger, was furious with Puisaye, the commander of the *émigrés'* troops, "a rogue who ought to have his neck wrung," and against England, which had caused the bluest blood of the French nobility to be shed in vain. But

that did not advance matters. The king, for his part, showed no sign of discouragement; and the spies of the Casa Gazzola could not help admiring his heroic staunchness.

He had, as a matter of fact, still one hope left. The Comte d'Artois had landed on the island of Yeu, whence he was to cross to Brittany and join the Vendée insurgents under Charette. The royal cause could still look forward to better times. "I shall not be at Verona for ever," Louis XVIII announced; "the arbiter of human destinies has appointed the moment which is to restore me to my own." Time passed, but no news came. At last a letter from Artois himself announced that he had been unable to join Charette and was returning to England. It was a severe blow. It was undoubtedly far from disagreeable to the king that his brother had failed to reap his harvest of glory, that the failure of the landing at Quiberon had been "an extinguisher on that infant flame." At the same time it meant that he too returned to the valley of the shadow, to the compulsory obscurity which had weighed on him for four years.

As his misfortunes grew, he reacted to them by an increase of his royal pretensions. He got up early and worked with his ministers. Time had made his voluminous correspondence a heap of rubbish, but the hours he had devoted to it had to be taken into account. The whole of his correspondence related to a future existence, the naïvest and sometimes the most

extravagant conception imaginable. There were instructions to Condé regarding General Pichegru, in command of the French troops, who seemed inclined to come over to the king with all his troops and baggage; letters of thanks to the members of the Parliament of Brittany who had sent him an assurance of their royalist sympathies and "whom he was most anxious to restore to their functions in accordance with the constitution of the Kingdom and the privileges of the province"; nominations to posts at Court; grants of commissions to *émigrés*, who, an ill-natured Frenchman observed, "need bread more than old paper, but run after these baubles and ask for pages' posts for their children"; rewards, crosses of St. Louis; annuities, subject to revision, certainly, on the re-establishment of the monarchy; notes to chancelleries, ministers abroad, agents, spies; an almanack of true Royalists setting forth the essence of the monarchy, the Court posts, the orders and their possessors.[1]

When this writing frenzy had worn off, he had the *Moniteur*, which was sent to him from Milan, read to him from cover to cover, and, after receiving "his people" in audience, took a short constitutional in his room or in the garden. In short, he played at Versailles, needless to say with limited means: he had a fixed income of only 10,000 francs, allowed him by Spain: the court of Sardinia had suppressed the louis a day it had formerly given him. But that did not

[1] He also drew up a new constitution.

matter; he borrowed, and sometimes a windfall came; 100,000 roubles from Russia, for example. That was a red-letter day; luxuries once more adorned the table, and everyone was happy till penury set in again.

As time went on, however, the exiles grew weary. As at Coblenz, they began to quarrel. Good-nature and tolerance were not the most marked qualities of the *émigrés:* "cabals" were the breath of life to them, and rivalries became acute around the phantom king.

One day the Podestà's agents spoke to the doctor, Colon, and asked him to have several men-servants, who were regular scamps, dismissed.

"I'll be damned if I will," the doctor replied. "There is so much intriguing and jealousy in the prince's house that, if I gave such advice, I should be suspected of trying to curry favour with his Highness, and should make enemies of the whole of his entourage."

The doctor was right. When d'Avaray had been sent on a mission, his good friends tried to ruin him with the king in his absence; when he came back he took his revenge. The Marshal de Castries, who had opportunely reminded the king that economy was a virtue and that the overthrow of the monarchy had been due to luxury, was disgraced on the spot.

The same phenomenon was observable in the relations of the *émigrés* with the Veronese nobles who received them. The Mosconis, Verzas and Marionis began to condemn the Frenchmen's levity and the style

of their wit, which did not even respect religion. What shocked them most, however, was their violent abuse of France; the inhabitants of the territory of the Venetian Republic were not accustomed to such lack of reserve. But the *émigrés* did not take things so seriously; whilst waiting for better days they amused themselves as well as they could, and when Count Litta, a singular man "possessing the gift of magnetism," arrived at Verona there was an outburst of joy. Litta carried out his experiments at the café in the Via Porta Nuova, and all the young nobles applauded him.

In the meantime, the storm which Venice had feared burst. At the end of January, 1796, her Ambassador in Paris, Alvise Querini, was sent for by the Minister of Foreign Relations of the Directory, Citizen Delacroix.

"Verona," Delacroix said, "has become the centre where all the conspiracies against France are hatched; there is a Council of State there which has its agents in Paris, in the West and the South. This cannot continue. The French Republic has no desire to persecute an individual, but the conduct of the Venetian Republic is a scandal, and suggests that it is not impartial."

Querini made a show of defence: he assured the Minister that the Comte de Lisle had made it perfectly clear that he was a negligible factor in politics.

"And what would you do, if you had someone who

professed to be your friend and plotted against you in the next room?" cried Delacroix.[1]

The result was a foregone conclusion. The French papers unanimously denounced the counter-revolutionary intrigues of the knights errant of Verona, the extraordinary consideration displayed by Venice for the regent *extra muros*. "Louis Stanislas and his assumed grandeur can no longer be tolerated," one of them wrote: "his mendicant Highness must be most politely and most gracefully shown the door."

Venice gave way without resistance. She knew that a French army was invading Piedmont, and was only too glad to be compelled to get rid of her guest. The task was nevertheless an ungrateful one. What form should the order for his expulsion take? The atmosphere at the Casa Gazzola was light-hearted: nobody troubled about "the robbers of Languedoc and Provence who were about to invade Italy under a leader in rags"—so they designated the young General Bonaparte and his troops.

On April 23, 1796, the Marquis Carlotti, sent by the Podestà, asked permission to speak to the Comte de Lisle.

"The Republic of Venice," he said, "has never refused any foreigner the right of sojourn in its terri-

[1] "What would you say if Schérer, commander of the army of Italy, went with a dozen men and arrested the pretender in his house? Would you complain of it as an act of violence? No, not if the Republic of Venice permitted conspiracy against the French Republic. . . ." *Venetian State Archives.*

tories, but it cannot compromise its own position. It was proud to have shown you its hospitality; but you have committed acts of unwisdom which have compromised its public policy. In the circumstances the Government is reluctantly compelled to notify you that the asylum granted you in the dominions of the Republic ceases from this moment forward."

"I take note of what you say," Louis XVIII said without moving an eyelid. That was all.

Two days afterwards, however, the Senate received the following letter from the King of France:

"I will go, but on two conditions: first, that the golden book in which my name is entered shall be given me, that I may strike out my name with my own hand; second, that the armour presented to the Republic as a mark of friendship by my ancestor Henri IV shall be restored to me."

"Official ill-temper," they said at Venice; but the letter had to be answered. The Marquis Carlotti went to protest against the letter, which so signally failed to recognise the benefits conferred upon the writer in the shape of nearly two years' hospitality.

"I will not receive your protest," Louis XVIII cried in that terrible bell-like voice he knew how to assume in moments of anger. "I will not withdraw my reply. I owed it to myself; I cannot forget that I am King of France."

He wrote to the Russian Ambassador in Venice and begged him to see that the two conditions he had

made were carried out in their entirety. Then, having saved his dignity, he prepared to leave.

The Podestà was on the lookout: he had the guard at the gate doubled, forbade any couriers to leave, and politely warned the *émigrés* that the slightest demonstrations on their part would cause them to be first imprisoned and then expelled. Otherwise, he gave the Comte all possible facilities: an escort would accompany him out of Verona, and he might turn all his notes into gold. But his inertia was a cause of alarm; for where would he find a place of refuge? The Podestà knew that neither Rome nor Turin wanted to receive him, and that Austria and England had given him to understand that his presence would not be welcome. And the Venetian Senate demanded that he should leave in a week!

At last, on the evening of April 30, it became known that the Comte de Lisle, disguised as an ordinary citizen for fear of his creditors, had just left Verona travelling under the name of the Comte de Grosboy, ccompanied by d'Avaray and two gentlemen: the carriage had taken the road leading to the Tyrol.[1]

Louis XVIII made for Riegel, on the Rhine, where Condé's headquarters then were. It was the only place of refuge open to him, the "asylum of honour," as he termed it. But he was doubtful whether Austria would let him get there. He was sure that she did not

[1] La Vauguyon, a man resembling the king in corpulence, remained in Verona to personate him.

want to see him in her territory. The passage must be forced.

Instead of following the Tyrol road, covered with couriers and mail vans, he took the Freiburg road and crossed the St. Gothard with the greatest difficulty; he was obliged, corpulent as he was, to ride on mule-back. "The road I am taking is the shortest and that which offers the greatest certainty of our meeting again," he wrote to his wife. But he recruited his strength at the halting-places. At Zurich, a M. de Saint-Gratien entertained him splendidly and had sixty bottles of champagne placed in his carriage. At last he arrived at Riegel, at the foot of the Kaiserstuhl, a meaner village even than Hamm, but dominated by a castle belonging to Prince Schwarzenberg. Condé was living in the castle.

Condé's army, now in Austrian pay, was living as miserably as after the defeat of Valmy. But now the king was coming, the king was there: and his presence excited a revulsion of enthusiasm which Condé could not resist. Louis XVIII found it politic to assume an attitude of humility. He was only the first gentleman of the kingdom, who was serving under the orders of the worthy descendant of the great Condé. He would pay his reckoning at the general's table. No etiquette would be observed.

Towards Austria he was even humbler: for her he was nothing but a simple soldier. Indeed, by virtue of this sojourn with an army, he hoped to acquire a

kind of military glory, to make himself another Henri IV. With this object the poor man mounted on horseback and reviewed his regiments, regiments eight men strong: and as the soldiers marched past, the cannon roared, and the drums beat in the fields, Condé said without a smile: "Sire, here is your regiment of the Auvergne, your regiments of Navarre and Champagne. . . ."

After one of these farcical reviews, the officers would assemble at a banquet. The king proposed a toast in Latin, and Condé replied; decorations were distributed: the skeleton army became inflated in the imagination, the illusion of strength grew, and Louis XVIII, blessing the unexpected insult which had deprived him of his asylum in Italy, began to believe in the efficacy of his presence.

A few miles from Riegel, on the other side of the Rhine, the French troops under Pichegru's command were encamped. They too were in a wretched state. Only the unfeeling river separated them from their brethren now in arms against them. Did Louis XVIII really go and show himself to his erring subjects, did he force his horse into the river and call to them, "I am your king, or rather your father"? It is undoubtedly a legend, a popular fiction invented at a later date. It is certain, however, that civilities were exchanged between the two banks; to please Condé's soldiers, the patriotic bands played "*O Richard, ô mon roi!*" after the Retreat. And the king of the moment,

the king by right felt that the strains conveyed an appeal to him. He wrote to Pichegru, whom he hoped to win over to his side once for all, and on whom he conferred the most extensive powers. "My judgment had already told me," he wrote, "that the honour of re-establishing the French monarchy was reserved for you."

The event was less heroic. The Germans took alarm at seeing the exiled prince applauded by a handful of loyal subjects; while Austria counted on defeating the French troops herself and was unwilling to share the gains of victory with him. The king was ordered to leave the army at once; if he refused, force would be employed.

CHAPTER IV

A VAGABOND THROUGH EUROPE

THE unwanted monarch wandered hither and thither along the roads, beating a retreat without having fought. All that was asked of him was that he should not show himself. He was at once negligible and alarming; though a fallen sovereign, there was still about him a dangerous reflection of his lost majesty.

One catches a glimpse of him at Dillingen, a wretched hamlet in the Black Forest, where he halted one evening. A detachment of Condé's army, retiring before the French troops, was billeted there. At once Louis XVIII turned from a fugitive into a king and decided that his soldiers should be allowed to enter the inn and pay court to him. All awaited their master's appearance in the smoke-filled *Stube* which acted as throne-room. A gentleman discharging the duties of usher opened a low door, which he vainly attempted to open as a folding door, and cried in the style of the Tuileries: "Gentlemen, the King!"

In he came, clad in the iron-grey uniform of Condé's staff, his shoulders humped with big crown-ornamented epaulettes. His face wore such an expression of calmness and dignity that his heavy figure and misshapen legs were forgotten. He spoke to his loyal subjects in his at once incisive and melodious voice, without boasting or depression, cordially and yet distantly, amiably but "without abandoning a jot of his majesty."

That reception in a grimy inn parlour, which with any other man would have been a ludicrous parody, was stamped by him with a certain grandeur; the soldiers, worn out with marches and counter-marches, forgot their weariness in listening to him. Louis XVIII had the royal gift of raising his surroundings to his own level.

The Germans saw in him nothing but a fat man without a home to call his own, and a mass of defeated foreigners streaming back over their territory, of whom they would gladly be rid. Nor were they slow to act when they met one *émigré* alone. On the evening of July 19, 1796, the king, wearied by the heat, was sitting with the Duc de Fleury at a first-floor window; candles were lit in the room behind him, and the outline of his body was visible against the light background. Suddenly a shot was fired from an archway close by; a bullet grazed the King's forehead, tore the skin on the top of his head and spent itself against the wall. Fleury gave a cry, and d'Avaray, who was

on the ground floor, rushed up and found the king covered with blood.

"It is nothing," Louis said calmly, "you see that I can stand up."

"Oh, my master, if the scoundrel had aimed a fraction of an inch lower!"

"Well, my friend, if he had, the King of France would have been called Charles X."

The news spread. The villagers, imagining that Condé would come and pillage their country, raised a cry of treason; the *émigrés* on their side shouted that it was a Jacobin plot, and in the tumult the king's life was for a moment in danger. The exits from the village were closed, but the would-be assassin could not be found. Fortunately the wound was not at all serious; the surgeon Colon, who had been hurriedly sent for, assured inquirers that "only the pericranium had been touched." Indeed, the wound healed on the sixth day.

"See how things happen," the king wrote to the Duc de Bourbon, "during the short time I was with the army I only saw a shot fired once, I was compelled by cruel necessity to leave it, and five days afterwards I was wounded, while your son [the Duc d'Enghien], who is always under heavy fire, has not received a scratch."

Louis XVIII took the road again, with a bandage round his forehead and no definite goal. The petty princes of Germany refused to receive him; at last

however, the Duke of Brunswick offered him hospitality—which, it was specified, should be only temporary—at Blankenburg, a little town at the foot of the Harz, in a hilly country of wood and pasture land. There was a *château* there which might, at a pinch, serve as shelter for a crowned head, but the Duke did not offer him the use of it, and he had to content himself with a brewer's house, a building in a narrow street, whose frontage seemed to consist entirely of windows. The owner, a Frau Schneider, lived on the first floor, so the king had to lodge on the second. There were three rooms: one served as a drawing-room and dining-room, one as the king's bedroom: the captain of the bodyguard inhabited the third, but it was also used as a chapel, and mass was said there every day. The Casa Gazzola was a palace compared to this.

Nor was Louis XVIII himself any more brilliant. He wore a very old blue coat and shabby black trousers; for coach he had an old carriage with two horses harnessed with ropes. But he quickly lent a touch of royalty to his life in this wretched place. In the absence of all other royal attributes he insisted on a rigid routine. The daily programme was drawn up once for all as follows: at ten o'clock, breakfast; at eleven, mass, after which he received in audience; at two, a drive in the Ty, the street which ran the whole length of the town; at four, dinner, with cards afterwards. Then the company broke up and met again at ten o'clock. Then the ladies appeared. They were

two in number—the Comtesse de Marsan, formerly the king's governess, and the Princesse Charles de Rohan. Louis XVIII had no objection to playing whist with them or with his nephews, the Duc d'Angoulême and the Duc de Berry; after midnight he declared the game at an end and bade his followers goodnight.

It was a peaceful, monotonous existence which his own good humour helped to make agreeable. "*La bile noire*," he wrote to his wife, "*a pris congé de l' honorable compagnie.*" On holidays he played the squire, and placed the emblematic crown of roses on little girls' heads. When one of them said, "May God give it back to you, Sire," he nearly fainted with delight, for any reminder of his kingship from the outside world was sweet to him. If he was to be believed, he suffered physically rather than mentally. He had brought from Verona a hepatic colic, which he endeavoured to cure with chicken broth and soap pills, which made him thinner: but when he received a little money, he abandoned all restrictions of diet and ordered caviare and Malaga wine, of which he was very fond, from Thauvenay, his agent at Hamburg. He lived, in short, the life of an epicure, of a gay philosopher. When someone remarked to him that it was dangerous for him to walk or drive unguarded in the Ty, he answered: "Be sure that the first person who cares to sacrifice his own life can have mine when he likes, whatever you may say or do."

This attitude of fatalism, of leaving all to destiny, was nothing but a pose. In reality, he had all the time, while the unchangeable routine ran its daily course, his eyes fixed on France, and his return thither was his sole thought. But his ideas had been ripened by experience; he no longer gave so much thought to great "enterprises" which were to re-establish the monarchy at one blow.

"If anything substantial is to be done," said wise men like Mallet du Pan, "the voice of the country must be listened to. Where so many interests are involved, *coups de main* are no use; what is wanted is a change in public opinion. It is men who count, not things."

The king was to a large extent in agreement with this view. Of course he did not at present contemplate any concessions to the new order. He would not hear of any national representation, deliberative assemblies, or freedom of the Press: all these he regarded as dangerous inventions for the people, that inert mass which it was the business of an active minority to manage without giving it any enlightenment as to what was going on. He would readily have agreed with Rivarol, who said that printing was the one plague with which Moses had forgotten to afflict Egypt. And when he examined his past acts, he decided that he had made the greatest mistake of his life when, in 1788, he voted for the double representation of the Tiers-Etat in the States-General. But

whatever his attitude towards reforms, he must find the ear of the nation, recall himself to his subjects' memory, remind them of the blessings they had once enjoyed and make them realise "the future benefits of a perfected monarchy." But how was that ideal to be achieved?

As an exile, with no direct view of what was going on in the country, he had of necessity to become the head of a secret police. This was a new task for which he had had no training, for Court intrigue and a political police are quite different things. Others had been in the same position as he. He could not help thinking of Charles II of England, who was so happily restored after the Cromwellian interlude; but he could not yet see a Monk, the general who was to play the rôle of *Deus ex machina;* and he had too much sense not to understand that the Revolution of 1789 was a different thing from the English Revolution.

He must have men. But the men who knew their profession, the old bloodhounds of the monarchy, were now in the pay of the Republic, and he had to call for volunteers. A few faithful nobles presented themselves, ready to risk their lives in the difficult business of carrying letters, circulating instructions, sounding and bribing people. These were the honest element in what we may call the royal agencies; but alongside them, how many blunderers, coxcombs, blockheads posing as men of importance! and, worse still, how many lunatics, shady characters and proved traitors!

They would make a strange portrait gallery. The Abbé Brotier, a Hellenist of repute but a "hardened wrangler," the lawyer François, who lived in the Rue de la Lune, in Paris, in a room fitted with all kinds of mechanical contrivances; Béranger, father of the song writer and a journeyman tailor, who was treasurer of the agency; the Abbé de la Marre, once a friend of Saint-Just and other members of the Committee of Public Safety, but now an ardent Royalist, who arrived at Blankenburg in a handsome yellow carriage of English make; Bésignan, a madman "who would compromise the Eternal Father himself," and let himself be robbed in the custom-house of five hundred pamphlets on the counter-revolution; and Danican, according to some the most negligible of men, according to others the most questionable—an ex-revolutionary who suddenly found himself at the head of insurgent Royalist districts and also made his appearance at Blankenburg. Then there were President de Vezet, a "starveling blunderer," who was in despair when the affairs of the monarchy seemed to be going better, for that would mean the end of the intrigues by which he lived; Fauche-Borel, the Neufchâtel bookseller, an amazing visionary who, because he had come into contact with governments, believed himself to have become the arbiter of the kingdom's destinies and had made a specialty of buying consciences; the so-called Comte de Montgaillard with his Portuguese-Jewish aspect, his flashing eyes and nutcracker chin, to whom

the Comte de Provence had paid compliments at the College of Sorrèze very many years ago, whom he had met again at Riegel, and who betrayed him with unalterable constancy. . . .

All these people, by nature and inclination, were devoted body and soul to the king! "There are never too many honest people," Louis XVIII used to say, but, although he had men of the sort, he could not restrict his dealings to them; he was obliged to have recourse to persons of the lowest type, for there are circumstances in which a man cannot be too exacting in regard to the characters of those who serve him.

He was a painful spectacle—the exiled monarch, wearer of a traditional dignity, writing to, or dictating letters to, people whom he hardly knew and despised in his heart. He flattered them to induce them to risk something for him, loaded them with fine phrases and assurances for the future to give them courage, and at the same time he paid them: yes, he paid them, although he had only just enough to live on himself. In reading through his correspondence with the royal agencies, one has the impression that he was the victim of a bad joke. The blunderers splashed about and achieved nothing, "phantoms in the darkness"; the starvelings and frauds reported great events to get a few louis; and the traitors took money from both sides.

Some, disgusted with the dingy rabble in which faithful servants of the monarchy rubbed shoulders

with professional sharpers, were revolted by the very name of "royal agent." "They are a lot of stinking beasts, and I will never have anything to do with them," the Duc d'Enghien said. But Louis XVIII saw things from another angle. Although the history of the royal agencies was simply a succession of bankruptcies, he declared them with every appearance of tranquillity; if he had been deceived once, he hoped not to be the next time. No prince had ever such wretched judgment of the moral worth of men: he never lost confidence in subterranean methods of bribery and espionage. That this was so does no credit to his reputation as a man of wisdom and perspicacity, but amply proves his obstinacy.

It may, however, be asked how far he himself was responsible for his failures? His most loyal "ministers"—Jaucourt, Flachslanden, Saint-Priest, and d'Avaray—had no capacity either as administrators or as policemen; there was a wide gulf between these aristocrats and Réal, "the man with the tiger-cat's head," Desmarets, the unfrocked priest, unrivalled at "cooking a prisoner," or Fouché—those heads of the Consular and Imperial police who have become almost legendary figures. It is a fault in a sovereign not to be able to find the right man for a certain task at the right moment. In the case of Louis XVIII the fact can be proved; he was deplorably served.

On January 31 the Paris agency directed by the Abbé Brotier was betrayed; it was sold to the Direc-

tory by the Prince de Carency, son of M. de la Vauguyon, the king's minister. Louis XVIII was not discouraged by this reverse; he immediately reorganised the agency, counting on better times. The elections had been favourable to the Royalists in France; Pichegru, whom Louis had made a marshal, was president of the Council of Five Hundred. A push, and the rotten Directory would collapse. But it did not; it grew stronger. On the 18th day of Fructidor (September 4) Pichegru was arrested, along with a number of citizens suspected of conspiring against the Republic. Barras and the Jacobins had won the day; the Bourbon party was left headless.

This *coup d'état* was immediately felt at Blankenburg; it caused, indeed, a palace revolution in the brewer's house. La Vauguyon, who had already committed the offences of being the father of a traitor, not sending off letters of which he disapproved, and—more serious—calling d'Avaray by an abusive name, was dismissed. "*C'est une affreuse chose qu'un scélérat!*" the king cried. At the very moment when he reckoned on victory, he saw the Royalists deported to Cayenne and France again under a reign of terror. But his nature was so full of hope that, instead of collapsing, he sprang up again: "his misfortunes grieved him, but did not shake his firmness."

He proclaimed in a useless manifesto addressed to France that the throne was stained with blood and had no attraction for him, but that he felt himself called to

fill it by Providence, by a vocation higher than the people's rights; the people could not give him the crown, it could only restore it to him. In this spirit the king sought to revive his party; he sent to the bishops instructions which would "persuade his subjects of the intimate connection between the altar and the throne, and show them that as they cannot count on any happiness in the life to come without religion, they cannot hope for any in this life without the monarchy."

And while he taught the priests his doctrine, he listened to Fauche-Borel, who proposed that he should buy over Barras, the victor of Fructidor. His cause had not really suffered. "Certainly," he wrote, "the future is covered by a thick veil. But one can lift a corner of it, and the prospect which I see before me is not so terrible."

Soon after this he was ordered to leave Blankenburg. Austria had just signed a peace with France at Campo Formio; and Prussia, fearing an invasion, would no longer tolerate the presence of the Comte de Provence in her territory. It was mid-winter, and the climate of the foggy Harz region was severe. The king asked "his brother the King of Prussia" for a period of grace; whatever policy might demand, he could surely not be compelled to take the road in such conditions, without anywhere to go or a roof to shelter him. But Prussia was obdurate; the vanquished must go. The Duke of Brunswick secured him with difficulty a week's respite: then the door of the brew-

er's house was shut on him, and his wandering life began again.

There was only one resort left to him—Russia. The reigning Tsar, Paul I, who had succeeded Catherine the Great, was half-mad; his flat nose and huge mouth full of gumless teeth gave him the appearance of a death's-head. He lived with an ex-barber of whom he had made a favourite, and a Mademoiselle Nedi-loff, "the most ugly and ill-tempered creature imaginable." He was gloomy, savage, easily angered; and everything French was an abomination. He proscribed French fashions, papers, books and music; anyone in St. Petersburg who wore a round hat and high boots was in danger of the knout, having his nostrils slit or even deportation. Nevertheless, this maniac had his intervals of good-nature; he had already helped Louis XVIII with money, and when he was turned out of Blankenburg he offered him an asylum at Mitau, in Courland.

This meant a journey right across Germany. The king tasted all the miseries of a winter Exodus—ruined roads, flooded rivers, pestilent lodgings. One day the wheels and axles of his carriage broke, and it had to be carried by hand. They were nearly engulfed between Königsberg and Memel, on the road which runs along the sea-shore, across the quick-sands; and in crossing the Niemen the boat in which the carriage had been placed all but sank. The exile bore all this with resignation. "I have not known for a long

time what comfort means," he said. At last, on March 13, 1798, he saw a little town standing out against the grey distance of the dunes. It was Mitau.

The Tsar had put at his disposal the former *château* of the Dukes of Courland, situated on a sort of island on the banks of the river Aa. The king passed along an avenue of beeches and planes, still in their winter nakedness, and stood before a large two-storied building with two wings, with quite a French air about it. The nobility of Courland, with the military governor at its head, was assembled in the great paved court, and a double line of *gardes du corps* was drawn up. Louis XVIII was moved; they were his own *gardes du corps*, whom the Tsar had taken into his service.

Then he entered into possession of his palace, with a sense of importance and a pomp which had long been foreign to him. He found there a touch of France: scrolls, rockwork, shells, garlands, rococo knick-knacks, the wainscots painted in rose and gold, crystal lustres, a Chinese room tapestried with shaven-headed mandarins who smiled at the visitor out of a landscape of pagodas and flowering shrubs—all this reminded him of other elegant, exotic things in the midst of which he had once lived. He breathed a royal atmosphere for the first time since he had left Coblenz, and, as his custom was, he immediately organised his household. He felt himself able to do so with a certain luxury, to resume at the other end of Europe the tempo, if not of Versailles, at the very least of Brunoy.

There was a labyrinth of staircases and corridors and three hundred rooms; but no furniture, beds or linen; the only habitable rooms were those of the king and the Duc d'Angoulême. The king would have to pay, and he did so without hesitation. The *château* was furnished indifferently and expensively; for however precarious the position of the new lord of Mitau might be, he was made to pay like a King of France.

In his renewed splendour, Louis XVIII forgot for a moment his never-changing cares and his perpetual state of poverty. Of a morning, his hair curled with the tongs and powdered, dressed in a blue coat with a red collar, his sword at his side, his legs sheathed in velvet gaiters, he went to the chapel between a double line of *gardes du corps*, greeting with a nod, as he passed, the courtiers who had come to Mitau and the shadow of a court. When he received in audience, two officers with drawn swords stood at the door of his room, and an equerry introduced the visitors.

As regards food, the Blankenburg régime no longer prevailed. There were two tables: certainly there was no linen, but there were two tables, and that was the chief thing. At the master's table sat, as a rule, the Duc d'Angoulême, who, however hard he seemed to try, could find nothing to say, and the Cardinal de Montmorency, grand almoner, who was very deaf and spoke little, but ate heartily. During the day there were walks and drives in the country round Mitau, a region of woods and lakes; visits were paid to the owners of

neighbouring *châteaux*. In the evening the king played cards in the great drawing-room, tapestried with blue kerseymere with a yellow border. Angoulême generally played against his uncle, and when his turn came to deal, he rose and stood upright while dealing.

Certainly the cups were of common earthenware and the tea-pot of pewter, but "elegance adorned distress"; the society of Mitau, cultivated, refined and Gallicised, harmonised perfectly with the circle of aristocrats at the *château;* and when he surveyed his court, settled a question of etiquette, or bestowed a dukedom on d'Avaray, Louis XVIII felt that he possessed the essentials of royalty. If he had cared to descend to the vaults of the palace, where the Dukes Biron, lords of Courland, were buried, he could have seen the mummy of the former ruler of Mitau, still dressed in his State apparel, decked with crosses, a grimace on his face under a white wig. For a prince who, thanks to Ducis, knew Hamlet, the sight would perhaps have been instructive.

Thus passed the summer of 1798. But the climate of Courland, which its inhabitants, fond of affectionate diminutives, call God's little country, is most inclement in winter, and spring is unknown there. It is impossible to go out, and reflections become disagreeable. The king might declare that he was quite content with his abode, but it was not true; it was only his pose of philosophy.

In fact, the Tsar's conduct was causing him great

uneasiness. Paul I not only refused to receive Louis, but refused passports to his faithful subjects appointed to his Court. The invasion of *émigrés*, for whom he had no use, angered the Tsar. "Do they think they are in Peru, or have they come to pillage us?" cried the maniac suddenly turned miser. The king felt himself a prisoner in his *château* of three hundred rooms: he begged in vain to be allowed to communicate freely with his agents. Paul I received emissaries from France in person and kept his guest in private confinement.

At the beginning of 1799, Louis XVIII learned that Russia was allying herself with England against France. Victory! The time for reparation had come. He sent d'Avaray to St. Petersburg at once with the following instructions. To obtain success, the Tsar must issue a manifesto declaring that he repudiated all idea of conquest, and that he was making war only to re-establish the king on his throne. The king would support the armies by his presence, he would be at the post of honour, his flag would wave in the advance-guard of the coalition, the French Royalists would rise!

It was an illusion. D'Avaray saw the Tsar for two minutes, just time to receive a compliment; he waited at his inn, but nobody came, nobody troubled about him. The king persisted, and received this answer: "The trouble I am taking to arm Europe against your subjects who are hostile to your rights should prove

to you how concerned I am for you." And the fallen monarch was obliged to congratuluate the Emperor of Russia on the ephemeral successes which his armies were then gaining in Italy.

The hour fixed by Providence which he was waiting for had not yet come. He relapsed into his narrow circle and his domestic unhappiness. He had told his wife, who was in Bohemia, to come and join him, but he wanted her to come alone, without the Gourbillon. Madame de Gourbillon had become a terror as time advanced: she sowed discord around her, declared herself the object of persecution, and as the queen could refuse her nothing, her will was law. The king could not tolerate the authority of another person alongside his own: with the Gourbillon at Mitau, he was no longer master. Besides, people talked in London and Vienna of the woman's objectionable habits, and of the strange ascendancy she had over Madame.

Honour and respect for royalty demanded that she should not accompany her mistress. The king ordered; the queen refused, and complained to the Tsar of her treatment. The scandal became public. Louis XVIII was horrified. "*Ma chère amie*," he wrote, "the Emperor of Russia cannot help having a strange idea of us two." But she held her ground, worried by her *femme de chambre*, who did not want to lose her rank and reminded her of the services she had rendered, the ill-repute and shame which she had borne out of fidelity to her mistress. "Are you going to abandon

me," she asked, "as only the greatest wretch would do?" [1]

Louis XVIII tried vainly to reason with his wife; he assured her that an equally capable *femme de chambre* could easily be found at Mitau. But nothing availed. The queen, completely under the serving woman's spell, brought her with her. But at the moment when the carriages entered Mitau, one of them was seen to turn and drive straight to the governor's house. The Gourbillon was in this carriage. She was told in plain language that she was going to be taken back to the frontier. She was not a woman to submit to violence; she struggled, and coarsely insulted the king on the steps of the building. A crowd collected, and the furious woman had to be arrested and taken under strong escort to a convent at Vilna.

Meanwhile Madame, still in travelling costume, gave full vent to her rage before the main door of the *château*. Gesticulating like a madwoman, she lamented her separation from her friend, who had been her life's happiness, and whom scoundrels had calumniated to the king. Louis was distressed by the disgraceful scene, unknown in the annals of the monarchy. He told his wife in a very loud voice that he would not let her leave. She was afraid of him, and calmed

[1] In a memoir justifying her conduct, Madame de Gourbillon boasted that she had cured the queen of "a disgraceful passion." It seems that Madame was addicted to strong drink.

down; and next day she took her place at the king's table.

Two days afterwards Louis XVIII received a compensation. His niece, the daughter of Louis XVI, arrived. The Orphan of the Temple, as the Royalists called her, had been liberated by the Directory at the end of 1795 and handed over to Austrian commissioners in exchange for some French prisoners. She lived at Vienna, in a kind of imprisonment, surrounded by people who detested the *émigrés*. The king was afraid that she would be "Austrianised," and, having first been taught to hate her own country, made to marry the Archduke Charles, a stammering epileptic who would thenceforward have had claims to the throne of France. That must be avoided at all costs. The Orphan's place was at her uncle's side; she would fortify him by her presence; she would serve as a kind of living protest, more symbolic than any banner, for the horror of the scenes from which she had escaped alive was still before her eyes.

Then the king, with d'Avaray's assistance, devised an idyllic comedy. It was understood that before the Revolution Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette had expressed a desire to marry their daughter to the Duc d'Angoulême, and that he, at Mitau, was dying of love for his cousin. "We need romance here!" cried d'Avaray, full of pride at his invention. The Comte d'Artois would stimulate his son; Louis XVIII undertook to deal with the little recluse at Vienna, and em-

broidered touching variations of his sentimental theme.

But before his work had reached its destination, Cléry, Louis XVI's last servant, brought him this note from his niece:

"I shall reject all the Emperor's proposals . . . I do not want him. God will never let me deny the illustrious blood from which I am sprung. I would rather be unhappy with my relations than be at the court of a prince who is the enemy of my family and of my country."

Then:

"I have one favour to ask of my uncle—that he will pardon the French and make peace. Yes, my uncle, I, whose father, mother and aunt they have killed, beg you on my knees to pardon them and make peace . . . You will never be able to regain the throne by arms; you can only do it by gentleness."

The words of this girl of eighteen to a man of sober sense, who amid a crowd of extremists seemed almost a man of wisdom, were a marvel of intuition, of womanly charity. Her words, coming from one who had known oppression and suffering, had an unequalled authority. Louis XVIII was surprised and embarrassed; he meant to play a cunning game with an innocent girl, and the innocent girl gave him a lesson in prudence and magnanimity. "*Je ne connaissais pas votre âme*," he wrote to her—and indeed he was not on her level. When he asked her to send to the Abbé

Edgeworth, Louis XVI's confessor, who was then at Mitau, a letter of thanks which she was to date with the day of her release, and which would be published, she flatly refused.

"Things like that," she wrote, "may be done by older people and when there are reasons which make it necessary. But it better suits my age and character to be simple and exact, like truth itself."

The king gave way.

After long negotiations he at last obtained for his niece permission to join him, and at once, with a singular zeal, set about the preparation of her rooms. He thought of the smallest details, such as the aspect of the room: bought books, embroidery frames, different kinds of silks, spangles, and gold and silver thread; and ordered a harpsichord from London. His eagerness to see her was intense. When, on June 3, 1799, a courier announced her impending arrival, he went out to meet her. It was very hot, and the road was dusty. A carriage appeared; a girl got out of it, ran to him through whirlwinds of dust and flung herself at his feet stammering, "*Mon père! Mon père! Sire, mon oncle! excusez mon désordre. . . .*" He clasped her in his arms and led her home in triumph. "Here she is! here she is!" he called, when they reached the threshold.

A week afterwards the marriage of the Orphan of the Temple and the Duc d'Angoulême was celebrated in the gallery of the *château*, where an altar had been

erected. The king, as he looked at the child who was so heartrendingly like her father and mother, meditated on a few little verses, composed for the occasion, which he meant to address to her; Angoulême stammered, as he always did, and Madame, her face working with emotion, silently lamented her banished serving-woman.[1]

The Duchess of Angoulême might have become the inspirer of the royalist agencies; for she knew France better than anyone in her entourage; she might have been the fresh stream which would give new life to the old river of the monarchy. But it was too much to ask of her in the circumstances. The young woman whose natural instincts were so noble soon became mentally befogged in the atmosphere of Mitau. As before, the illusions brought by new arrivals were the staff of life in Courland.

One day Dumouriez appeared. Proscribed four years before as a traitor to France, he was now trying to get the Bourbons to take him in tow. A short fat man, muffled up in a huge coat which doubled his girth, with a fur cap on his head, he came to Mitau to wash his hands of his former republicanism. His manners were bad, and he felt awkward among the *gardes du corps* who wore the cross of St. Louis and

[1] When someone said to the king that his niece had simply obeyed orders, he exclaimed: "I wish those fellows could see things for themselves, with their own eyes, not that they might be converted, but that they might burst with vexation and rage!"

the white cockade, but his plans for the king's restoration were magnificent; there was to be an insurrection in the South and a landing in Normandy. Louis XVIII listened to him with pleasure, and capped his quotations.

Another time Field-Marshal Suvoroff, commander-in-chief of the Russian armies, came. He was a thin, puny little old man, repellently ugly, who employed the language of a visionary and ceaselessly crossed himself. Astonishing stories were told of him. In bitterly cold weather he used to strip naked, and his soldiers turned a hose on him—which was said to be an infallible protection against rheumatism. He ate nothing but millet and herrings, which he devoured squatting on the ground. He was a true Scythian, a Cossack risen from nowhere. At Mitau he behaved with Oriental politeness; he kissed the skirt of the king's coat and remained in this posture for a long time, with his head almost between the august sovereign's legs. On leaving he said to the *gardes du corps* who escorted him: "The king's faithful servants —honour and protection. The Jacobins—no quarter."

There was even a more secret visitor who arrived one evening, disguised as a merchant, and was conducted to the king's presence by a secret staircase—a young man with a good figure and beautiful hair. He was said to be the Duc d'Orléans, son of Philippe Egalité who had voted for the death of Louis XVI, and representative of the "rotten branch" of the

Bourbons; he was believed to have come to make his apologies to the king.

These new offers of allegiance and assurances of devotion kept hope alive; yet everything miscarried. Letters patent in the old style had been sent to "*notre aimé et féal Paul, Vicomte de Barras*," appointing him "the king's Commissioner General for the purpose of re-establishing the monarchy." Afterwards, Louis had had to admit that Fauche-Borel's scheme had been simply bluff. No matter! Louis XVIII drew up fresh instructions with a view to his return to France. "He will show himself to his subjects, who will see a king forty-four years old and in good health." At the very moment when he wrote this, Suvoroff was being defeated by Masséna at Zurich. But nothing weakened his confidence. He maintained that Europe could not do without him, that he was the corner-stone of the Continental edifice; "Where the king of France is, the frontier is." He even thought of obtaining recognition from Turkey, failing other Powers.

Nor did the *coup d'état* of the 18th of Brumaire, the rise of Bonaparte and the establishment of the Consulate astonish him. The only question that vexed him was whether the First Consul would place the French Bourbons or the Spanish Bourbons on the throne. He remade the map of Europe, and overthrew the Revolution in fancy. If Bonaparte did not comply, he would demand his resignation, for he was the only man who could successfully oppose the victorious

general, the only man who definitely stood for the monarchy against the Republic, for the rightful king against the usurper. He wrote to the Tsar with a seriousness which is almost incredible: "Do you not think it would be good policy to arrange a meeting between your brother in arms Louis XVIII and the Consul Bonaparte?"

The Paris agency had been reorganised for better or worse, but its activities, when it displayed any, took the most foolish forms. On January 21, 1800, the anniversary of the king's death, a long mortuary cloth had been hung on the façade of the Madeleine, and Louis XVI's will posted up; while Royalist brochures were distributed in the streets. It was hardly worth going to the trouble to get this little ant-heap of conspirators arrested. The Paris agency had given one more proof of its vitality. At the same time the Swabian agency, which was to "school" the East and the South, and which had been moved to Bayreuth, was discovered and its members arrested. The king's weapons were falling from his hands one by one.

He now dreamed of the realisation of a great plan which he had been cherishing for a long time past—that of entering into direct communication with Bonaparte. He had received information from his police. The Corsican cared little for politics; no one knew if he really hated the Bourbons or only pretended to hate them. At any rate, he offered no objection to the return of *émigrés*. It might be possible to get hold of

him through his wife, who had Royalist connections and, it seemed, could talk business with her husband in bed. Otherwise he was not of much account—"a very clumsy knave," said a man who knew people in Bonaparte's circle.

With these reports in his possession, Louis XVIII made his plunge. A new Monk might be hidden behind the little officer; Bonaparte had not been a "guillotiner"; and anyhow, in such circumstances, a bold stroke was called for.

On February 23, 1800, the Abbé de la Marre left Mitau in his little English carriage, bearing a letter from the King of France to the First Consul. The terms of the letter were the fruit of much labour. The king was inclined to be long-winded. Passages were deleted, and the letter in its final form was a simple proposal for an understanding. Bonaparte was to say what he wanted, indicate the place he wished to fill and designate posts for his friends. The king needed him and he needed the king: they two together could assure the future glory of France. Louis sent off the letter, and waited.

When the king's letter was handed to him, Bonaparte smiled. A dethroned prince asking to be allowed to return to his dominions without drawing the sword! it was an incredible naïveté, an incomparable piece of buffoonery! He added, more seriously: "It is not the king, but the monarchy, that it would be difficult to restore."

the ex-barber who was the Tsar's favourite. Another factor which contributed to a speedy settlement of the king's fate was that the Tsar had suddenly been smitten with an admiration for the First Consul. At the same time a letter was intercepted in which d'Avaray ridiculed the Court of St. Petersburg. This led directly to the order of expulsion. "Hospitality is a virtue, not a duty," said Paul I.

Louis XVIII trusted his host, despite his whimsicality.

"I know the ground," he said. "You can trust me to know how it should be ploughed."

It did not look like it. But how could they go? The roads were covered with snow; how could he travel in such conditions, with his niece? And where could they go? He had no money, for the Tsar had forgotten to pay his last quarter's pension. He tried to melt his benefactor's heart; but his letter came back still sealed, with the passports required for the journey. It was the 20th of January, and the Duchesse d'Angoulême, in her room, was praying for the repose of her father's soul with Abbé Edgeworth, when the king entered in tears and told her the news. The young woman did not move an eyelid; she said a few words of encouragement to her uncle, and returned to her prayers.

Next day the whole *château* was in a state of confusion. The furniture, and "the effects of the king and his suite," were being sold. It was a wholesale

robbery. Everyone allotted to himself what took his fancy at the lowest price; even the governor, no longer restrained by considerations of official politeness, took a hand, and demanded that soiled household utensils should be thrown in with his purchases. When all this was over, at about three o'clock, there appeared first a kitchen cart, then a travelling carriage containing the king, d'Avaray, the Duchesse d'Angoulême and her lady of honour; then more travelling carriages, including the servants'—nine vehicles in all. The Courlanders watched the passing of the procession with a kind of reverence; but they were more sorry for the coachmen freezing on the boxes than for anyone else; they had not been provided with furs, and for good reason.

Once more the king and his court wandered along the roads of Europe. The kitchen cart upset. When night fell they could find nothing but a poor inn where sixty peasants were smoking in the common *Stube*, and they had to pass the night amid the stale fumes of tobacco, beer and spirits. The Duchesse took refuge in a bakehouse. On the fourth day the wind rose and made the snow drift. The carriages could not move, and the king, compelled to walk, crawled along with difficulty on his niece's arm. On the Prussian frontier new difficulties arose. Fearing an examination, the king entrusted his most valuable papers to the Duchesse, who hid them under her skirts. Then the Duc de Fleury went off to find how the land lay.

"If all goes well," Louis XVIII said, "you will say that you come from me: otherwise you will say that you come from my niece."

"Oh, *mon Dieu!*" the Duchesse cried: "I am in for it!" *(Je suis pour le mauvais.)*

Fleury's instructions were changed as the result of her protest. At last they were let through, and reached Memel. Here they were joined by five *gardes du corps:* all the French had been expelled from Mitau and were only enabled to exist by the compassion of the inhabitants. At the sight of these unfortunate people the king wept, addressed them kindly, and was anxious to wait at Memel until all the exiles were there. But they had to be fed, and as funds had run out, the Duchesse pledged her diamonds.

Louis XVIII, not knowing what point of the compass to steer for, entered into negotiations with Prussia. That State, with Bonaparte's consent, agreed to tolerate his presence on condition that he kept quiet. Warsaw was allotted to him as a place of residence. Accordingly he set out from Memel. But tragedy dogged his footsteps. On the morning of his departure the Abbé Marie, one of the almoners, was found dead in his bed; he had stabbed himself with a dagger. The suicide of a Catholic priest, in intimate relations with a king, was a scandal in a Protestant country. Only after some parley was permission for the unfortunate man's burial given.

Even now, however, the exile's troubles were not

over. On the road to Pultusk his carriage met that of a Polish lady, went too far to the right of the road and upset into a ditch hidden by the snow. The Duchesse fell on top of the king: luckily the door did not give way, but they had to wait a long time for a new carriage, standing in the snow. When they reached the Vistula the ice had begun to break up, and they had to wait two days more. In crossing the river one of the horses was drowned.

At last, on February 22, a month after leaving Mitau, the king arrived at Warsaw, the haven of rest. He showed a good countenance, announced that he had the impudence to be in the best of health, and cast a fatherly look on the Duchesse d'Angoulême, who was caressing a little dog—the same which had been little Louis XVII's companion in captivity in the Temple prison.

CHAPTER V

OBLIVION

PEOPLE walking in the Saxon Garden at Warsaw used to point out to one another a fat man wearing a blue coat, grey serge trousers and velvet boots, who walked with a waddling gait, followed by two servants in livery. He lived in the Princess Branicka's house in summer and the Lazienski palace in winter. Little was known about him except that, although a member of a great family, he lived quietly, and it had been noticed that people sometimes came out of his house shouting loudly that they wanted their money and would wait for it no longer.

The Comte de Lisle's money troubles had never been so acute. The Tsar refused all help; he considered that he had done enough by keeping the king and his *gardes du corps* during their stay at Mitau, and would give nothing more. Spain could hardly be called generous: it was only by repeated applications that a little money could be extracted from her. "If I could," the king said, "I would send my brother of

Spain and his reals to the devil." But life was hard with a household of sixty persons. If a little money came, it was carefully concealed; for if the creditors got wind of it, it would be gone in a twinkling.

Louis XVIII could not resign himself to a reduction of his *menu*. He was always in excellent humour at meals, and insisted on a certain decorum being observed. Although he preached economy to his wife, who had been ill and had been to Pyrmont to take the waters, he was more lax where he himself was concerned. Nevertheless, he had to retrench; his dinner was reduced to three courses, which he ate with dignity, although his coat was threadbare and had holes in the elbows. The gentlemen of his suite, even worse off than himself, engaged in business, more often than not of a shady kind, to keep themselves alive. At last, however, Austria decided to pay over to the Duchesse d'Angoulême the money left by her mother Marie Antoinette, and the King of Prussia ordered Louis' creditors to stop persecuting him. Thus a respite was gained and life became rather easier again.

In spite of his disappointments, the king did not give up the idea of working on public opinion. He had a secret committee in Paris, the most important member of which was Royer-Collard. Royer-Collard kept him informed of events and the state of public opinion; his despatches were well written, bright and clever, with a Gallic wit intended to amuse the august reader. But this did not greatly advance matters.

Sometimes an adventurer offered his services; for example, Méhée de Latouche, who assured the king that the First Consul would soon be assassinated. D'Avaray listened and, so great was his need of illusions, would have liked to believe what was said; but the king had no longer any faith in violent solutions. When, on leaving Mitau, he had heard of the attempt on Bonaparte's life in the Rue Saint-Nicaise by means of an "infernal machine," he declared, "I curse the authors of the attempt, whoever they may be." Then he had added, more classically:

"Et pour etre approuves,
De semblables projets veulent etre acheves." [1]

The quotation was more applicable to Bonaparte than the king realised.

At the beginning of 1803, the Burgomaster of Warsaw, Herr von Meyer, received the following orders from the King of Prussia. He was to represent to the Comte de Lisle that a free, entire and absolute renunciation of the throne of France would be an act of wisdom on his part; and if the Comte made objections—people in misfortune easily became agitated—he was to point out that the Revolution had irrevocably excluded him from the throne, that all classes of society needed a period of rest, and that, moreover, a

[1] When, at a later date, the proposal was made that Bonaparte should be put out of the way, he replied: "In my family we do not assassinate, we are assassinated."

brilliant position would be given him. Surely, it was argued, he could not reject so honourable, advantageous and safe a proposal. If he still remained obstinate, the Burgomaster was to suggest that "the descendants of St. Louis would not always find an Alexander."

These words, mutilated by a Prussian intermediary, bore the stamp of Bonaparte himself. Louis XVIII received the proposal most haughtily. When the Burgomaster spoke of poverty, he said:

"I am not afraid of it. If it were necessary, my children, my servants and I would eat black bread. I should make my situation known in France, and I should soon be richer than I am."

It was an answer worthy of Duguesclin. But he went further, and drew up a protest, which he addressed to all the European chancelleries. In it he said:

"I draw a distinction between Bonaparte and some of his predecessors . . . But he is mistaken if he thinks I can be induced to bargain concerning my rights. On the contrary, if they could have been made the subject of dispute, he would have established them more firmly than ever by his present action. I do not know what God's intentions are with regard to my race and myself, but I know the obligations which he has imposed on me by virtue of the rank to which I was born. As a descendant of St. Louis I shall be able to preserve my self-respect even in captivity; as a successor of Francis I, I wish at least to be able to say with him, 'We have lost all save honour.' "

When this royal answer reached the First Consul, he did not, like the king, take it very seriously. He pretended to ridicule it.

"This document in which Louis XVIII, who has never fought in his life, talks to me about St. Louis and Francis I—to me, who have avenged St. Louis on the Mamelukes and Francis I at Pavia! It is not worth talking about."

The Bourbons were troublesome to him, as was shown in 1804, when he seized and executed the Duc d' Enghien—a necessary sacrifice to his security and greatness, he said. The news of the murder was received with horror at Warsaw. The king made use of every expression of grief and rage: at the same time he perceived indications that the tyrant was at the end of his tether: Russia was breaking away from him and Austria and Prussia hesitating. If he could join the members of his family and act in concert with his brother, he would offer his mediation to Europe, regain the crown and restore peace. The moment was favourable; he asked the Comte d'Artois to meet him at Kalmar, in Sweden, and prepared to leave the Lazienski palace.

Just at that time, on July 22, 1804, the Duc de Pienne, first chamberlain to the king, received a visit from a former soldier in his company named Coulon, now a café-keeper in Warsaw. Coulon told him that two men, one of them dark, wearing a grey coat and a checked jean waistcoat, the other fair, in a blue coat

with a velvet collar, had come into his café and ordered drinks. Coulon complained to them that he could not pay for the shop and billiard table which he had bought, on which the drinkers immediately offered to give him 400 louis "on condition that he would put a packet into a saucepan." They made an appointment for the night of the following day, outside the town. When Coulon arrived at the spot designated, a man came out of a cornfield and handed him a packet.

"They know you at the Lazienski palace," he said; "you are to go and ask the cook to cook something for you, and you will choose your moment to drop this packet into the saucepan in which soup is being made. When you have done it, come and tell me, or you are a dead man."

Coulon, just like the washerwoman at Verona, took fright and brought the mysterious packet with him. It contained fresh carrots, hollowed out and filled with a sticky composition. They were analysed and found to contain an arsenical poison consisting of three arsenics—white, yellow and red. The king was told, and immediately informed the police that an attempt had been made to murder him. He feared, he said, not only for his own safety, but for that of his family. The Prussian police, however, would take no notice of the affair; they said that a criminal prosecution would be necessary, which could not be undertaken unless they had proofs in their hands, and that Coulon might be a fraud. In short, Louis XVIII had to leave

without obtaining any satisfaction whatever, and quite convinced that he had nearly been the victim of a Bonapartist plot. He was no doubt quite right. These attempts on his life at once disquieted and encouraged him; if he was universally recognised as politically negligible, as Vienna and St. Petersburg were kind enough to say, why were these attempts made to get rid of him?

He reached Kalmar after a wretched sea passage lasting ten days. He had powdered his hair and wore the Swedish Order of the Seraphim, but his grey coat and nankeen trousers thrust into his high boots gave him anything but a royal air. He was nevertheless received as a sovereign, which gave him pleasure. On October 7, 1804, his brother arrived. He had not seen him since his stay at Hamm, and would hardly have recognised him. Artois was pale and seemed to be oppressed by a great sorrow; he was a very different person from the gay lord of Versailles. Madame de Polastron, his mistress, had just died of consumption in England. Fersen was there too, the queen's devoted friend, who had tried to save the royal family on the night of June 21, 1792. It was the past come to life again; the king wept in his arms.

During his stay in the little Swedish port, whose inhabitants were far from unfriendly, and where he could really feel himself a wielder of royal power, Louis XVIII, with his brother's co-operation, drew up a proclamation to Europe. It differed from his previous

manifestoes in being marked by a tone of clemency and willingness to make concessions. It offered a general amnesty, and guarantees to officials, purchasers of State property, and officers. A further indication of the king's dearly acquired prudence was the fact that he did not dare to date it from Sweden in order not to compromise his generous hosts. The king spoke to his people "with only the sky and the sea for witnesses."

The Kalmar interview was not likely to revolutionise the European political situation. Prussia, however, took advantage of it. The king, she declared, had committed a hostile act against France, and "his stay at Warsaw was incompatible with the neutrality which his Prussian Majesty intended to maintain." Louis XVIII was not much surprised. He had considered himself bound to make a public protest against the conduct of Bonaparte, who, after murdering the Duc d'Enghien, had had himself crowned Emperor in defiance of all right. His protest made, he retired into obscurity, "pretending to be dead, but on the watch for any favourable opportunity." To pass the time more pleasantly, he composed a Latin epitaph in honour of Gustavus Vasa, the Swedish hero on whose territory he had received genuine hospitality for the first time since he had been an exile.

Paul I had been strangled three years before, in one of those palace revolutions which were a Russian

specialty, and his son Alexander had succeeded him. He was said to be saner than his father. The king, not daring to compel his family to remain permanently at Kalmar, begged the new Tsar to give him a refuge in Russia. Kieff was promised. Kieff! That would mean being buried in snow for the rest of his days. "The only thing for me to do," he said, "would be to pray to God that he might speedily deliver my soul out of my body!" He insisted that an alternative should be offered him. Alexander consented, and allowed him to return to Mitau. This was a lesser evil. The king had friends at Mitau, and knew the ins and outs of the place, which to a man of fifty is not a matter of indifference. Ensconced at Mitau, he could address to God the song of Simeon. He set out for Courland in good spirits, "making jokes, talking now of Bonaparte's poison, now of the Tsar Paul's fits of rage, just as in old days, on his way from his lonely grotto at Versailles to a *fête* at the Trianon."

He found Mitau much changed in four years: it was deserted and pillaged, and had lost its French atmosphere. The restoration of the *château* was not to be thought of. The move from Warsaw had meant a heavy loss: stocks had been laid in for the winter and leases renewed, and all for nothing. There was nothing for it but vigorous retrenchment. The number of equerries and servants was reduced, likewise the pay of those who were retained; the benevolent fund was suppressed, and kitchen expenses ruthlessly cut

down. There was now only one table instead of two, and that frugally supplied.

The king was installed in the least dilapidated wing of the *château*, and a garden had been laid out in the courtyard for the Duchesse d'Angoulême. She might be seen walking there, stern of countenance already, accompanied by a strange individual, short and fat, wearing a shabby hat of battered straw over bristly grey hair, and a soiled skirt surmounted by a ragged black taffeta cloak. This creature, of whom the children were frightened, was the Queen of France. Louis XVIII passed his time as best he could. Long ago, he had amused himself by copying a Republican calendar in minute characters for the pleasure of Madame de Balbi, who was anxious to possess this then uncommon toy; but Madame de Balbi's fate and his own had long been severed. Now he chatted with d'Avaray, who had just been seriously ill, looked after him with fatherly devotion, read to him, and in the intervals dreamed of returning to France.

One day, he had a fall and had to take to his bed; he could as easily "have taken the moon in his teeth as mounted a single step." He and his wife, always unwell, made a fine couple. "Mitau the first was Saint-Germain," he used to say. "Mitau the second is a ward in the Hôtel-Dieu." With illness, step by step, came boredom. Men grow dusty as well as things. The sole occupation of the gentlemen was finding a good dinner at all costs: the Duc d'Angou-

lême thought only of vespers, Court bows and shooting; and the queen unceasingly bewailed the absence of her beloved Gourbillon.

The historic events which were taking place not far off did not affect the course of life in the fastnesses of Courland. Austerlitz and Jena were ignored. An officer entrusted by Napoleon with a mission to St. Petersburg spent an evening at Mitau, and was astonished to hear, at his inn, the purest French being spoken, and to see men with a red ribbon in their buttonholes.

"The Legion of Honour, here?" he asked.

"No, the cross of St. Louis."

"In whose service are you?"

"In the service of his Majesty the King of France."

Napoleon's soldier was astonished. The King of France! a sovereign who was seldom thought of in the *Grande Armée.* And when he left, after dark, the *château*, with all its windows lit up, but not a soul to be seen or a sound to be heard, reminded him of a country house deserted in the midst of a festival.

As the months passed the dust grew thicker; a semblance of life was maintained only by dint of a few intrigues, which gave scope for practice in arrogance and jealousy. When a loyal subject arrived, filled with emotion at the idea of seeing his king again, he was received by d'Avaray, Grammont or one of the others, yawning gloomily in an armchair.

"So you have come," were the words of greeting.

"Why have you come? It would have been sufficient if you had written."

A monotonous life in a gloomy climate had broken the exiles' spirits; they no longer believed the fantastic stories told them by people like Perlet, a spy in the pay of the Imperial police. Royalists who still retained any vigour of mind did not tarry long in a museum of fossils who "disgusted them to the point of nausea." [1]

One day, however, the country house woke up. The Tsar Alexander was coming to pay a visit to his brother Louis XVIII. The king, although suffering from gout—he now paid regularly for every deviation from his régime—advanced to the door to meet him. The Tsar was polite, if not cordial, and the king was unusually talkative; he had to give vent to so many long accumulated thoughts! He expounded his programme for over an hour. He should be allowed to raise his flag, advance to the frontier, organise an expedition to Brittany; and as Alexander listened without making objections, he felt himself beginning to glow with hope.

On his return to St. Petersburg, the Tsar said to M. de Lesseps, "I have seen the king—the most negligible, insignificant creature in Europe." That wreck of royalty would never reign; he would hear no more talk of him. Indeed, Alexander had other things to occupy his mind.

[1] The Duchesse de Dino, *Souvenirs.*

The war came nearer to Russia. Convoys of soldiers, hardly able to drag themselves along, begging for alms, showing their festering wounds, bandaged with hemp, passed though Mitau. The Russian hospitals were shocking, and, at the initiative of the Duchesse d'Angoulême and the Abbé Edgeworth, the *château* was converted into a hospital and barracks. Thenceforward the atmosphere changed. The convalescent soldiers walked in the courtyard, and the king could watch, from his window, the frantic dances of Cossacks and Bashkirs. He was to see the same spectacle later, but with other eyes.

In July, 1807, the Tsar made peace with Napoleon; it became impossible for Louis to remain at Mitau, in the territory of an ally of the usurper. But what sovereign could he ask to receive him? Napoleon's victory embraced the whole of Europe; only Sweden and England remained. He accordingly made for these countries. He wandered from place to place like a man on a chessboard. He embarked on board the Swedish frigate *Troja*, and after ten days' tossing, made fast on deck, was within an ace of putting in to Stralsund, which had just fallen into the hands of the French troops. At last the *Troja* managed to reach Karlskrona. The King of Sweden, Gustavus IV, arrived there at the same moment, defeated and discouraged.

Louis XVIII felt that he could not inflict his presence on the fugitive sovereign, and decided to go on

to England. He was not sorry to be able to watch more closely the activities of the Comte d'Artois. Artois, surrounded by intriguers and enthusiasts, and well provided with English money, while the king no longer received anything for propaganda, had little by little assumed the leadership of the *émigré* party; his committee in Paris subsidised conspirators without reference to anyone. Louis XVIII objected to these encroachments, which diminished his own importance. "I come first," he said: "I must live and die first." He wrote what was in his mind, tactfully of course, for he knew how easily Artois took offence; but his letter was ignored.

"Do you think it is an easy matter," the king sighed, "to exact obedience from one's brother, when we have played together as children and slept in the same bed?"

Once in England, these troubles would cease; he would get the upper hand again.

On landing at Yarmouth, he learned that the Government had allotted him Edinburgh as a place of residence. This did not suit him. He did not consider the fogs of Edinburgh any better than the snows of Kieff. If he was compelled to go there, he would rather go back to Russia, where he had his family and a household. He wanted to live in London. He felt that he was almost in a position to make demands, seeing that he was bringing his hosts an accession of strength, intangible but of divine origin, which was worth whole armies.

"I have the certain knowledge," he wrote to the King of England, "that I am providing your Majesty with a powerful ally. It is not I myself who am this ally, but the King of France." [1]

The British Cabinet did not take such a grandiose view of things: its outlook was more earthly. The title of King of France, in 1807, was but a faint echo in men's minds. It was good policy to keep it in reserve, for no one knew what might happen: it might be a pledge in the event of victory, a bogey if possible. At any rate it was a name. But in the meanwhile the king would have to live modestly and obscurely, under English protection. There were, thank Heaven, plenty of flowery cottages and grassy meadows where he could live healthily, comfortably and cheaply. And so Louis XVIII, who had hoped to support with his presence the last enemy of the usurper, was reduced to the rank of gentleman farmer.

After staying for some time at Wanstead with the Prince de Condé, where he enjoyed himself—for, he said, "I am petted here, which is something new to me" —he was lodged at Gosfield, on the Buckingham property, forty-five miles from London. The house still bore traces of splendour, but it was not nearly large enough to accommodate the king and his suite. Princes of the blood, and famous Royalists, had to put up with

[1] Louis XVIII once said, at the table of a German prince: "If anyone speaks of the king, without any further explanation, only one king can be meant—the King of France."

wretched rooms, very likely with one of the garrets. The king apologised for discharging the duties of hospitality so badly.

"It is all thoroughly nasty and thoroughly uncomfortable," he said: "the only excuse for these beastlinesses is the kindness with which they are offered."

As the result of living among the "beastlinesses" he complained of, he had gradually lost the species of dignity which hitherto had prevented him from begging too openly. He needed money at all costs, and he made an open show of his royal impoverishment, telling poor *émigrés* officially that they could not count on him for help. If the Government did not make up its mind to provide him with a proper establishment, he would be obliged to go and sleep in Newgate prison! At other times he employed literary devices: he hunted up letters in Madame de Sévigné's correspondence in which the subsidies paid by Louis XIV to James II of England, when he was in exile at Saint-Germain, were mentioned and asked for reciprocal treatment.

His entourage regretted their peaceful life at Mitau. They asked why they had made such a plunge into the unknown, why they had come so far to lead such a wretched life: why the king did not see that he was barely tolerated, that his stay was assumed to be only a temporary one. But Louis XVIII was always exactly the same, whether he lived in a *château*, an inn, or a ruin. He liked talking English at ladies' parties,

and being recognised on the roads. When he heard behind him the words, "It's the king," he threw out his chest. He continued to reign in his own mind: he dreamed of creating Knights of the Order of the Holy Spirit, for he was afraid that with the passage of time the Order would be confined to members of his own family. He had a temple to Gratitude erected in his garden, with oaks planted round it, to commemorate his stay in the place.

He no longer simulated death; he had his eye on all that was happening in France, but how distortedly he saw it! When he was told that Perlet was arriving with information about a Royalist Committee which was going to overthrow the usurper and re-establish the monarchy, he grew almost nervous. He, the King of France, went to meet the low spy who was fooling and cheating him: he flattered and listened to him without a moment's distrust, without an instinctive movement of repulsion. The most obvious lies, the most stupid inventions gained his attention and belief.

Nor were d'Avaray, La Châtre, and the other gentlemen of his suite any more perspicacious than he was. Aristocrats, men of delicacy and refinement, they had lost during their period of exile "*le sentiment des temps*," the ability to understand the time in which they lived; they had retired into the past, remained there and judged events from an out-of-date viewpoint. They suffered from a loss of mental equilibrium, an

extinction of common sense, which caused them to live in a world of unrealities, an atmosphere of naïve romanticism, and find it perfectly natural. And most of all Louis XVIII, the least romantic, the most formal of men.

Gosfield was only a stage in his journeyings. He wanted a place where he could be really at home. The Government at last allotted him a pension of £6,000 sterling; and in the spring of 1809 he rented from Sir George Lee for £500 the estate of Hartwell, near the town of Aylesbury, about fifty miles from London.

It was no Versailles: but it had an atmosphere of tranquillity and order soothing to the mind. A carriage road leads past a gardener's cottage and under an archway to the house—a quiet plain grey, unadorned building, surrounding by lawns and meadows, with here and there thick copses which stand out in dark relief against the oppressive English verdure.

Before the front door is a flight of steps ornamented with twin columns. The arched window on the right, in the shade of a magnolia, is that of the king's study, a narrow room with no fireplace and a large bookcase. Next to it is a lumber room, just large enough to hold an iron bed; this was his bedroom. The official apartments were on the same scale. A room at an angle of the house was the drawing-room; they used to meet there of an evening, the king enthroned on a red leather chair, with a board attached to it on which he rested

his gouty legs. There was a hall where receptions were held, the dining-room next to the drawing-room, and the chapel on the left of the entrance hall, close to the room of the secretary, Gonnet.

The house is of two stories only; a yellow wooden staircase leads to the second floor, where there is a gallery ornamented with statuettes. The accommodation of the miniature Court—the queen, the Duchesse d'Angoulême, the Ducs and their suite, the Archbishop of Rheims, the gentlemen of the king's household, the confessors and servants, not counting the faithful Turgy, who made himself famous long ago in the Temple prison—presented a problem. The best bedroom was allotted to the queen: and in it, worn out and ill, she remained sitting in a chair for days on end, her hands crossed on her knees and a stool under her feet, gazing out of window at the meadows which extended to the horizon and the inevitable river spanned by a bridge with three arches. Her ladies of honour, of whom Madame de Narbonne was the principal one, slept in the next room, whose walls were covered with a blue paper adorned with pheasants in pairs. The others found quarters where they could. To accommodate all the guests the upper rooms were subdivided by wooden partitions: so that the king's Court came to resemble a convent.

The Court gradually settled down to a regular life in this atmosphere of rustic peace. The king went out at twelve o'clock with a wide hat on, after looking at

the barometer which hung in the hall. He walked slowly along the gravel pathways, inspecting his domain. He saw how the rose-trees were growing, how the apricots were setting, whether there would be fruit that year. When he grew tired, he sat down on a circular bench under an old cedar at the end of the main avenue, and, hat in hand, questioned the faithful Bastange, the gardener. On other days he got into his carriage—he still had one, with two horses—and drove about the country, greeting the people he met, gossipping with the daughter of the landlord of the "King's Arms," patting children on the cheek, paying compliments to their parents, playing the father to foreigners, as he could not do so to his own people and was anxious not to lose the knack.

At five o'clock, however, he became himself again. His court awaited him, and sometimes the ceremony known as *grand couvert* took place. On these occasions the king dined alone in the dining-hall, with the doors thrown open, and the populace was admitted to watch him eating. The populace, however, was scanty. Those who came might see d'Angoulême, with his eternal restlessness, his wife, her face haggard from rising at five o'clock in the morning and going on errands of charity; the Duc de Berry, his face haggard too, but from other causes; the queen with her bent back, and now and then some guest, a bird of passage, who, by the exercise of faith and goodwill, could recapture in this English country house a little of the

atmosphere of the great days gone by. But guests became rare, for the *émigrés* had gone home again; via Hamburg, "the purgatory between London and Paris," they had returned to their paradise, France. The "die-hards" censured them for abandoning the cause, but Louis XVIII was wiser; he not only did nothing either to encourage or to stop the exodus, but he congratulated one *émigré* on having accepted a councillorship of State from the usurper. He did so with no ironical intention, for it is not bad policy to secure sources of information in the enemy's camp.

The little parasite court vegetating in the shade of the great English oak grew smaller every week. The king's chief concern at the moment was to get the British Government to recognise the ducal rank which he had conferred on d'Avaray. He was all the more anxious on this score because his favourite had just been publicly insulted by Puisaye, who had headed the Quiberon expedition. Louis XVIII could not suffer a wretch whose clothes dripped with Royalist blood to affront his friend, his *alter ego*, whom he admired so much that he even copied his clothes. He summoned a jury of honour to bring the imposter to book. Puisaye failed to appear before it, on which the king formally declared him to be disgraced and removed from the Army List. Puisaye, however, was not much concerned.

"His Most Christian Majesty's army?" he jeered. "A substantial reward is offered to anyone who can

discover where it is, return it, or notify M. d'Avaray, its generalissimo, of its whereabouts."

The king was anxious to retort in a conspicuous manner which would satisfy "his feelings and his own honour." But England knew nothing of the Comte de Lisle in the capacity of King of France; he could not, he was told, create dukes in a country that was not his. Louis XVIII persisted in his demand.

"This business is seriously on my mind," he wrote to La Châtre, his representative in London. "Does the Government mean to declare itself against me and in favour of that scoundrel Puisaye? All that the Comte de Lisle has done is to announce in England what the King of France did eleven years ago in the territories of his ally, Paul I."

His efforts were fruitless. D'Avaray was a duke, but only at Hartwell. Except the king, nobody cared. All were weary of the favourite—the Comte d'Artois' friends, who had grown accustomed to do as they liked, even the Duc d'Angoulême, who, cautious as he was, did not conceal his antipathy. If the situation was growing worse, it was the fault of that "*mignon d'Henri III*," the thin little sickly man whose opinions were always decisive. When he became seriously ill and was obliged to leave England, he was regretted only by his master. He died of consumption at Madeira in 1810, and the Court were afraid to tell the king immediately, for he had the gout, and they "were

afraid that the attack would shift to another part of the body, where it would be dangerous."

His death left Louis XVIII, for practical purposes, in solitude. His brother lived in London and stealthily pursued a policy of his own; Angoulême seemed to be next door to a nullity; his wife never emerged from the haughty silence which had become habitual to her; Condé, who had just regularised the relations between himself and the Princess of Monaco, had no desire but to go on living quietly at Wanstead; and the Duc de Berry thought much more of his mistress, Amy Brown, than of the future of the monarchy.

Fortunately, d'Avaray knew that his master could not live without a favourite, and had bequeathed Blacas to him by way of a legacy. The new private secretary was a pale-faced man, with a quite bald head under a wig which was too fair, irreproachably dressed even in the morning, tall, distinguished and sparing of words. His arrival was unwelcome, but the king approved of him, as being the gift of a very dear friend, and said to him:

"Never mind what fools say, and go on driving my cab."

But where should Blacas drive him? He was in a rut, on the verge of upsetting. First and foremost, means of subsistence had to be found.

This time the king resumed his lofty tone and made his demand as a sovereign in adversity who was entitled to honours. He pointed out to the English diplomat-

ists, who were not overfull of delicacy, the lack of consideration with which he was treated. His representatives in London and Vienna, he said, could not afford to keep a carriage; the pensions of the French loyalists were no longer paid: the "royal hostelry of Hartwell" was in danger. At the same time the Comte d'Artois and his entourage received an allowance. He mentioned this fact, so to speak, *en passant*, without bitterness; he did not recriminate, he simply put forward a claim.

His tone was not that of a person under an obligation, but of a friend in misfortune. He appealed to the most natural sentiments. "Do you know what the future has in store for you?". . . "Will you allow a king's majesty to be decried in my person?". . . "All sovereigns have an interest in my situation being remedied." These letters, which are nothing but requests for money, have about them some breath of grandeur, of nobility supporting poverty. One would not believe that they had been written at a common deal table, in the little study at Hartwell whose arched window is shadowed by a magnolia.

His letters, however, made but small impression on the dissipated prince who was playing the rôle of regent in place of a mad king. His pension was paid him, ungraciously, but beyond that point he had to defend his position farthing by farthing, and the "cab" got deeper into the mud.

He could no longer maintain agencies; a woman,

General Moreau's widow, was the king's only informant regarding current events. But Louis XVIII did not give up hope. He had tried first to seduce and then to bribe all the men who had had, as he believed, the destinies of France in their hands—Pichegru, Hoche, Barras, Bonaparte—but it had been sheer waste of time. The Republican or Imperial armies, led by generals risen from nowhere ("*sortis de la boue*"), did not know what defeat meant. But now Spain was checking the usurper: Louis immediately turned towards her, entered into relations with Cevallos, the Spanish rebels' ambassador in London, and Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington, and followed the changing fortunes of the struggle between the new Vendeans and the master of Europe. It was not that he cared for the fate of the dethroned king, Charles IV of Spain; he saw nothing praiseworthy in his conduct, and returned to him his Golden Fleece, with which order the imbecile Bourbon had thought fit to decorate Bonaparte. But the national rising of a people showed that the tyrant was not invincible.

"Glorious descendants of the great Pelayo," he cried, "we are all burning to join you. I am only one soldier the more, but I would gladly have hastened to Saragossa the day before that noble, unfortunate city succumbed to the assaults of an enemy superior in numbers."

When the news of a French defeat in the Peninsula came, the thought of the Corsican's despair delighted

him; he saw him laid prostrate, and the Revolution with him. But the descendants of the great Pelayo paid no attention to the master of Hartwell, and England disavowed him. It is the way of the world.

In the meantime a new society was forming in France. *Emigrés* and Jacobins had at length joined hands in a common admiration for the Emperor; Royalists and revolutionaries marched in step; things had completely settled down, and a general servility prevailed. The king, at Hartwell, did not realise the transformation which was taking place; in spite of a few defections, he still thought of his loyal subjects in the enemy's camp secretly planning his return.

The marriage of Napoleon to Marie Louise of Austria undeceived him. The news reached Hartwell one morning. The Duchesse d'Angoulême fell ill, the queen gave vent to a terrible outburst of anger, and the gentlemen were filled with wrath against the Emperor of Austria as responsible for the "monstrous sale of human flesh." The king shut himself up in his room, reading over and over again the account of the awful ceremony in the papers, and noting the names of deserters, one by one: the greatest families alongside nobodies, Royalists of ancient lineage soiling their coats-of-arms, the *plebs* victorious. He was visibly upset all day; his misery was painful to see, and he refused to receive anyone.

When, in 1811, he learnt of the birth of the King of Rome, he supported the blow better; he made an at-

tempt at irony. Was it really the Archduchess's child? he asked. In any case, what had he to fear from the arrival of a baby in the "Napoleon family"? One of the two things must happen.

"If God has condemned the world," he said, "Bonaparte will not lack successors; if, on the contrary, the divine wrath is appeased, all the brats in the world will not prevent the house of iniquity from collapsing."

He had decided to put himself in the hands of Providence, and, as of old, he repeated, "God gave me the crown, God took it away from me, His holy Name be praised." Time might bring great events and overthrow the Emperor, "the spoilt child of victory."

While this political drama was taking place before the eyes of the world, the queen's room at Hartwell was being the scene of one humbler and more secret. Madame de Gourbillon, after the success of her intrigues at Mitau, had followed her mistress's tracks; but as Louis XVIII refused to receive her, she had settled in London, penniless and, she said, ill. Madame, imprisoned at Hartwell, lamented the absence of her dear Marguerite, "the being she loved most of all in the world after God." She endeavoured to bring about her return; she laid down a line of conduct which Madame de Gourbillon must follow, and tried to persuade the king. But his invariable reply was:

"It is useless to say anything more to me about Madame de Gourbillon or her affairs."

Letter after letter came from the former *femme de chambre*, tender and bitter by turns, recalling the services she had rendered, enlarging on her present misery: and the queen was panic-stricken. Madame de Gourbillon wrote that she was so ill that she could not stand upright, could hardly eat and was covered with a foul sweat at night. The doctors, Colignon, Lefèvre and the *Père* Elisé, could not understand at all what was the matter with her. Scrofula, scurvy, ringworm, one said; a diseased liver, kidneys or pilorus, was the opinion of others. In the meantime she was dying by inches, and the thought that her friend was unhappy doubled her sufferings. The Gourbillon declared that she was going to die.

"I have nothing left in the world," the queen groaned: "I am bound to tell you, indelicate though it may be, that the money I send you is all I had to buy myself chemises with, for mine are falling off me."

But the Gourbillon was insatiable, and gradually the few jewels saved from the wreck—a box of silver, a large coffee-pot which was "the only jewel in the crown," and a gold dressing-case—passed into dear Marguerite's hands, thanks to a man-servant who was in the ladies' confidence. If only the king would give something! But the "*milord pot-au-feu*" turned a deaf ear. Certainly life at Hartwell was not on a generous scale. There were cracks in the walls of the house: the inmates were exposed to wind, rain and cold: great and small lived in garrets, where masters

had as little room as servants. The queen herself was at the end of her wardrobe, and to keep warm she wrapped herself up in anything she could find—flannel, cloth, fustian. All this stuff rolled round her made her appearance so grotesque that she got up and went to bed alone so that her maid should not see her.

But the Gourbillon would not surrender. She complained of the tone of the letters she received, and above all of not being admitted to Hartwell. What new calumnies, she asked, had been invented to blacken her character? She understood that she was accused of stealing jewels. The queen, shaking with fever, half blind with ophthalmia, apologised, wept, and exhorted her favourite to be calm.

"I beg you on my knees to forgive me [she wrote]. I have been told that I have lost my honour by allowing myself to become so intimate with you, that I have rendered my morals open to suspicion and so involved the king in dishonour. . . . You must write the king a letter which will appeal to his conscience and his feelings; you must touch his heart, not fly out at him. . . . I am suffering horrible pain. . . . My lower teeth have been dislocated by convulsions. I no longer eat or drink too much. . . . I am taking purges of cammomile oil and camphor. . . . I wished to let you see my handwriting and assure you how tender my friendship for you is. . . . Death is approaching, our time is short. . . . There is only one Marguerite in the world!"

The queen was not making herself out, for reasons of her own, more seriously ill than she really was.

When she looked in the glass her ugliness terrified her. "Once I was a horse," she said, "now I am just an old screw." She would have liked best to be allowed to die in peace, but she was the queen and must play a queen's part. After luncheon the king went up to his room, where everyone assembled, and did not seem to notice his wife's condition; and at five o'clock she had to descend as best she could the staircase, as steep as a ladder, and take her place at dinner. But it is an understood thing that sovereigns are never ill.

The queen, who in old times had played the lady farmer with such simplicity and loved to make the bird soup which Monsieur so much enjoyed, began to dislike her fellow-creatures. She was made to feel that she was a burden, she said, allowed to suffer want, dragged in the mud. In her own words, "Injustice ends by making one independent," and she judged her entourage from this standpoint. She had a good word for no one. Mademoiselle de Choisy, the Duchesse's maid of honour, was a spy between kitchen and anteroom; d'Havré and the archbishop were a couple of blockheads; Hue the body-servant was her sworn enemy; her attendant Péronnet was as stupid as an owl. La Châtre, the favourite for the moment, incurred disgraceful expenses while she was in penury. She did not spare even the master of the house. She wrote:

"It is a fearful thing to be with idle people. He drives me mad with his stinginess and his pedantic fussiness in refusing

to make any change in his daily arrangements. And what excruciates me most is that he thinks that in this country it is necessary for him to be considered a good husband!"

In truth, much happened that Louis XVIII had no knowledge of. He suffered too much from gout, from the "Lady Podagra" who pursued him, to think about other people. And so the Gourbillon continued her little game, sold the presents she received, and blackmailed her mistress. The queen, at night, or when her husband left her alone for a moment, dragged herself out of bed and, holding her right wrist in her left hand—for her arm was paralysed—wrote her hopes and fears to London till she was compelled to stop by weariness. "I love you to my last sigh . . . I cannot go on." The dying woman's letters, staccato with grief and passion, make tragic reading.

In November, 1810, the queen took to her bed for good and all. She could not take food, and the doctors now agreed that her Majesty was dying of dropsy. On the morning of the 13th, she said: "It's all over, I am dying." The king was walking in the garden: someone was sent to tell him, and he came in weeping. "You will weaken me," she said, and when her maid of honour, Madame de Narbonne, continued to display emotion, she asked, "*Mon cœur, ne m'aimez pas tant?*" Then she passed away.

The body was in such a condition that it had to be placed in the coffin without delay: but the king demanded that she should be buried with all due cere-

mony. The interment took place in London, and the English watched the long funeral procession of the queen who had never reigned from King Street to Westminster Abbey: twelve outriders, a string of carriages, a herald bearing the crown, the hearse, drawn by six horses, a hired mourner, and all the distinguished exiles in order of rank. It cost a great deal of money, so much that England objected to paying the entire expenses and cut off a part of the royal pension.

"When anything distresses me," Louis XVIII used to say, "I try to distract my thoughts from it." He did not find this at all easy after his wife's death. Her disappearance was painful to him, and the pain he felt astonished him. He may have felt some remorse; he had certainly treated Madame too much as an imaginary invalid. Then, too, in a place like Hartwell it was impossible for the members of the family to live isolated from one another, and she had come to occupy a position she could never have held if he had been king in his own country. When anyone told him a story, he used to say to himself, "I must tell her that." He used to go up and see her every day, and pick flowers for her in the garden. All these little occupations and actions had lost their *raison d'être.* Not till she died did he do justice to her, and realise that she was neither foolish nor bad. If only he had really known her!

"My sorrow," he wrote later, "has become less acute, but I still feel it. I no longer shed tears, but I feel a

void a hundred times a day. The time of sweet converse is over!"

The spring that year was lovelier than ever, the garden full of scents: but he had no one to whom to offer its roses!

While his entourage grew bitter, and Blacas vituperated against the decadence of the times, he retained his equanimity. He was imperceptibly sinking to the level of the *petit bourgeois*. In the morning he read the newspapers—for he had ceased to inform himself at first-hand of what was happening; then he sat down at his table and slowly polished precious letters ornamented with quotations, Latin and English. When his gout did not keep him at home, he went for drives in his old carriage, at a gentle pace. "One does not stay long away from a nest like mine," he said. He had at least the pleasure of relating what he had seen, and this he did with a meticulous care, an attention to minor details and a want of feeling for the picturesque which are amazing. One has the impression of a half-witted old bachelor, hampered by petty cares, dying by inches in a confined atmosphere.

But at times he raised his voice. "My decisions," he said, "whatever they may be, must not become a subject of discussion." The king was always living under the *bourgeois* exterior.

He gave proof of this when he received a visit from the King of Sweden, who had just been driven from his dominions. Gustavus IV arrived alone in a car-

riage, "with only his sword for suite and two pistols for escort." Louis XVIII was under obligations to him, and lodged him as well as he could. He sent for a piano, for the Swede was a lover of music as well as a visionary, and played billiards with him. What did the two dethroned kings say to one another during the months which they passed together? Did they exchange views on the art of government? It is unlikely. Gustavus IV carried out fantastic enterprises in his dreams, and Louis XVIII, who lived closer to earth, had a poor opinion of his mental stability. His forecast of the unhappy prince's future was a terribly gloomy one:

"I predict that he will never reign; and, I add with sorrow, he will never enjoy the least happiness."

He felt that he himself was of different metal: fallen sovereigns were not of his stuff.

His confidence was sustained by a few incidents which varied his monotonous life. One day the Duc d'Orléans came to do homage to him as his sovereign. The Duchesse d'Angoulême repulsed the regicide's son with horror and fainted; but the king received him civilly and apologised for his niece as being subject to palpitations. Another time some Tyroleans asked to have the honour of paying their respects to the exiled prince. So be it; he would see the "Alpine Vendeans," and he made them a majestic speech in the dining-hall.

But his was a very small kingdom. To realise that it is enough to read the French register of Hartwell.

This slender little book, kept by the Grand Almoner Talleyrand-Périgord, is more eloquent than many chronicles. It contains a few baptisms, many deaths of old servants with foreign-sounding names, Russian, Polish, German; wrecks who followed wrecks, but with high-sounding functions—"*garcon attaché à la bouche*," and so on, as in the old days. And the king deigned to sign marriage contracts.

What were Louis XVIII's feelings when he had been put to bed in his little iron bed, which he completely filled? There, perhaps, he had his doubts. Would he be only a poor man who would leave no trace in history, something like an excommunicated pope, a second-rate grandee? Certainly Napoleon had re-established the principle of authority: and he was the one and only depository of authority, by right, tradition and sacred laws. But all abandoned him: he could see no bright future for his line. Even the Vatican had declared that the papacy was not bound to corpses. At these times he told himself in vain that like the prophet Elijah, he must *ambulare in fortitudine;* he felt desperate.

After his time of glory, Napoleon had St. Helena. Before his restoration, Louis XVIII had Hartwell. It is England's privilege to have held these two men, in their extremity of misery, under her domination.

CHAPTER VI

THE RETURN OF THE UNKNOWN KING

AT three o'clock in the morning of the Saturday before Easter, 1814, a courier arrived at Hartwell. Blacas was woken; it was a message from the Regent of England announcing that Napoleon had fallen and that the Bourbons had been recalled. Blacas, candle in hand, led the courier along the passages, through the study and into the redoubt called by courtesy a bedroom where Louis XVIII slept. The king received the news with perfect calm; he made no demonstration, but in his heart he was delighted.

When Napoleon was defeated in Russia in 1812, he thought his hour had come; the same Russia which had turned him out of doors, the same bitter winter he had known, was without doubt to be his deliverance. "*Vive le roi!*" Joseph de Maistre wrote. "Bonaparte has no longer an army." It was rumoured that Ney was killed, even the Emperor himself. Hartwell grew feverish with excitement; the ladies were already

discussing the dresses they would wear for the entry into Paris and the king was negotiating with the Tsar, who, unfortunately, considered that it would be premature to produce the old dynasty at the moment.

Then came the defeat of Leipzig to arouse fresh hopes, to encourage him anew. "It is the first stroke of the Corsican's death-knell. If you go into a Paris drawing-room, you read his doom in every face, and hear his condemnation from every mouth." In February, 1813, Louis XVIII decided to address to his people one of those essays in rhetoric in which he was so skilled.

"The moment has come at last when Divine Providence seems ready to break the instrument of its wrath!" he wrote.

But these words, charged with the thunder of Jehovah, echoed in the void. The Corsican still resisted; and if he was struck down, would the allies agree to re-establish the Bourbons? This state of uncertainty lasted for a year. The exiles talked loudly and put on airs to impose on others and give themselves confidence; but in their hearts they feared they might be duped. The witty queen had once described the poor little Court as consisting of "*trompeurs, trompes et trompettes.*" [1]

At the beginning of April, 1814, a very short letter came one evening announcing that the king had been

[1] "Deceivers, deceived and fine talkers." The play on the word obviously cannot be reproduced in a translation.

recalled. Contrary to custom, they sat up late waiting for the news to be confirmed, but nothing came. On Holy Thursday, during mass, a carriage decorated with white flags passed through the gateway of Hartwell; it was a delegation from Bordeaux come to pay their respects to the king. After mass the king embraced the delegates and spoke to them as he always did on such occasions, like a father. But these demonstrations of loyalty were not worth as much as an official despatch in proper form.

On the Saturday before Easter he at last received this despatch, read it through twice by the light of the candle which Blacas held, and the clouds were dissipated. Only the Duchesse d' Angoulême was told, and silence reigned again at Hartwell.

Thus Louis XVIII suddenly ceased to be Sir George Lee's tenant and became King of France. It involved no effort on his part. He had never ceased to reign in spirit since the Verona days, and needed no apprenticeship to learn his trade as a ruler. He remained at Hartwell for another fortnight and on April 20, in the uniform of a Marshal of France, escorted by the gentlemen of the county, he descended the flight of steps with its twin columns for the last time and set out for London.

The city was decorated, the Life Guards were drawn up in Hyde Park: the English wore white cockades as a mark of sympathy: the cannon roared. The British Cabinet, quite comprehensibly, was lavishing

delicate attentions on the new monarch. The asylum given to the exile may not have been graciously accorded, but at any rate it had been good policy, and England, in restoring her sovereign to France, now reaped the benefit. The Regent offered him a palace for his lodging, but Louis XVIII refused and held his court at the Hôtel Crillon, seated at last in an armchair more regal than the red leather chair at Hartwell. Everything was done according to the official regulations for sovereigns' visits: receptions, trappings, gold lace, and exchanges of decorations. The Regent put the Garter round the king's knee—a knee, a witness noted, as thick as a young man's body. Louis XVIII thanked him, declaring that he owed his restoration to Providence and England.

Three days later the king embarked on board the *Royal Sovereign* for Calais. When the ship drew near the harbour, the king appeared on deck. He heard the murmuring of the crowd on the shore and saw the troops drawn up on the quay. When he was close enough for his stout silhouette to be clearly seen, standing out against the sky, Louis XVIII extended his arms towards heaven in a spasm of emotion, then closed them again over his heart. This symbolical gesture was received with shouts of applause.

When he set foot on French soil, the excitement of the crowd became delirious; they pressed forward, eager to inspect a king at close quarters, and see what such a being was like. This one seemed a simple man.

His sword caught in his garter and he looked as if he was about to fall: and the mob, perverted by the Revolution, wanted to help him. Blacas indignantly intervened: the king was not to be touched. The proper distance between king and subjects having been re-established, he proceeded to further triumphs. The church where the Te Deum was celebrated was not large enough to hold the crowd, and the congregation prayed in the open air. "The city and the shore have become a temple, and Justice and Peace have come down to earth to embrace one another in the open air."

At each stage on the journey to Paris the same enthusiasm was displayed. At Amiens the royal carriage was drawn by millers dressed in grey cloth. When the cathedral doors were opened to admit the people, "there was a noise like a flood." The Duchesse d'Angoulême prostrated herself before the altar, and the congregation was deeply moved. It rained hymns, choirs, acts of royal grace. "No more alarms!" the people said. "What charm! what majesty!" Louis XVIII seated, his stick between his legs, reminded collectors of prints of Louis XIV at fifty. When, at the banquets held in the evening, he pronounced the wines with which he was served to be exquisite, every face brightened. The exile from Hartwell was by no means indifferent to the rich love-feasts at which he was entertained.

There was a halt at Compiègne, a royal residence. Here Louis came for the first time into official con-

tact with the army, with the marshals of the Empire who were now called marshals of France. The newly-arrived king had not a martial bearing, with his powdered hair tied with a black ribbon, his white waistcoat down to his knees, his blue coat with gold buttons and his gaiters as wide as a skirt: but he had read and remembered much, and knew how to talk to the old soldiers, who would have sent him to the gallows a few months earlier and now gave him extravagant assurances of devotion. He let them see that he knew their titles of honour, and, to break the ice pleasantly, exaggerated his infirmities, tottered when he rose, took their arms, and said: "I wish that you, gentlemen, may always be my support; but, *morbleu!* if we had to draw the sword again I would march with you, gouty as I am."

They would put him down a gouty man, but good-humoured, with a vein of agreeable malice. When they went into dinner he said to Lefèvre, who also had the gout, "Well, Marshal, are you one of ours?" Nor did he forget to send vermouth to the officers' tables for them to drink his health in.

He seemed to have made a conquest of the pillars of the State, as he called them. The sovereigns who had just invaded France at the head of their troops came next. With them Louis XVIII adopted another tone: he knew with whom he had to deal, and the conversations became stiffer in tone. The Tsar Alexander

thought little of the Bourbons and did not intend to place them on the throne.

"How," he said to Talleyrand, formerly a minister of Napoleon, "can princes who are so little known satisfy the wishes of the French?"

The Senate, no doubt, had recalled them, but what of the nation? Bordeaux had acclaimed them, for commercial reasons: its sentiments were based on casks not disposed of and unsold harvests. Would not the Orléans family be better received?

Such were the Tsar's predispositions when he arrived at Compiègne. He was conducted through the royal apartments, but they were not reserved for him, and he had to content himself with rooms in the governor's house. When dinner was announced, the king passed in before him, dignified and cold, and took his seat in an armchair, while the Tsar sat on an ordinary chair. Every minute and every word emphasised the atmosphere of dependence, of hospitality grudgingly given. The days at Mitau were long past, and the king of an ancient line naturally took precedence of a second-rate sovereign whose pedigree could have been written on a playing-card.

The Tsar was deeply wounded at the king's attitude. He left the same evening, and on the way to Paris expressed his annoyance to his intimates.

"The Duchesse d'Angoulême is a very bad manager," he said: "she might have taken the trouble to get decent rooms ready for me. The king is an egoistical,

narrow-minded fellow, with no ease of manner or geniality; he never gets off the high horse. At Compiègne, he might have been Louis XIV receiving Philip V—if he had been dethroned! Certainly these Bourbons are a poor lot; all the royal families in Europe have shed their blood to bring them back to their throne, without they themselves receiving the smallest scratch, and we do not even get a civil word from them."

It was more than the Emperor of all the Russias could understand. Where was the fantastic dreamer, the most negligible individual in the world, whom he had once seen in Courland?

The fantastic dreamer was preparing to re-enter his capital. He wondered whether it was necessary to make popular concessions, "to ally ancient memories with modern ideas," or not. Charles II of England had recovered the crown without agreeing to any diminution of his rights: the "die-hard" Royalists were very fond of this precedent. It was not, they said, the people which called the king to the throne, for he had never lost his rights, never ceased to rule. He returned by virtue of the hereditary principle in order of male succession, as French custom demanded. The States-General and deliberative assemblies had been tried and found wanting; these vestiges of revolutionary folly must be wiped out for all time. The Duc de Duras, first gentleman of the Chamber, decided the question

more bluntly. *"Il faut que la canaille sue"* ("we must make the mob sweat"), he said.

But politicians who had lived through the Revolution and the Empire, and professed to be in touch with public opinion, talked very differently. It was impossible, they said, to abolish the past with a stroke of the pen: the king, on returning to his kingdom, must give pledges to the new men, limit his own authority, and guarantee liberty.

Louis XVIII, in making his decision, had to choose between the advisers of yesterday and the advisers of to-day. By inclination and temperament he was drawn towards the complete re-establishment of the monarchy as it had existed in 1787, and the affirmation of the Divine Right.

"What am I without the Divine Right? Only a feeble old man."

But exile had ripened his intelligence: when, at Mitau or at Hartwell, he had jotted down his reflections on politics, he had come to the conclusion that a return to the *ancien régime* was impossible, that unlimited liberty was inadmissible, and that the wisest course would perhaps be to allow a qualified liberty which would safeguard the nation against despotism and anarchy—"provided that one knew the ground." At Saint-Ouen, pressed for a decision by the Tsar and those who spoke in his name, he resigned himself to the inevitable and consented to give guarantees to his subjects, but without touching the very foundation

of the monarchy: the people should not impose a Charter upon him, but he would benevolently grant it, for such was his good pleasure.

The Divine Right having been safeguarded, and the nation not being called to give its advice on the gift of joyous presage it had received, a committee composed almost entirely of former Imperialists set to work to draw up the new constitution. They had to work quickly, for the allied sovereigns wished to leave, but not before it was published. It was in fact, scamped. From four to six the committee submitted its work to the king, and at six o'clock, invariably, Louis said, "That's enough: it's a detestable business, but I am pledged to it." It might have been a *vaudeville* they were writing. The secretary, Beugnot, hurriedly drew up a preamble: a clean copy was not even made. Thus the Charter of 1814 came into existence. Chateaubriand called it a treaty of peace between the two parties which divided France: put more simply, it was his Majesty's Louis XVIII's ticket of admittance to his good city of Paris.

The Tsar was not wrong when he spoke of the profound oblivion into which the Bourbons had fallen. Who was this Louis Stanislas Xavier? Young men in the Emperor's service asked their parents what family he belonged to: was he the Duc d'Enghien's father or Louis XVI's son? The poet Barthélemy confessed that he, in his youth, had no idea

Que l'heritier des lys regnait incognito
Dans le chateau d'Hartwell, a la cour de Mitau.

When Chateaubriand's pamphlet, *De Bonaparte et des Bourbons*, appeared, it was a ray of light, for the genealogy of the family was almost as strange to the public as an enumeration of the children of the Emperor of China would have been. Thus Louis XVIII arrived without popularity or reputation, with no aureole round his head, not even the traditional respect for the anointed of the Lord. This had to be remedied by dignity and ceremonial; and of these there was no lack.

It was May 3, a day of brilliant sunshine. The crowd in the suburb of Saint-Denis was thick: there were white cockades and white dresses everywhere: it was the colour of the day. From the balconies hung wreaths of muslin, replaced in humbler homes by cloths. The route was kept by 20,000 National Guards, with bunches of lilies stuck in their gun-barrels.

A rolling of drums was heard. It was the old Guard, a column of thirty men, imposing but chilling; the old soldiers marched sullenly as though at the head of a funeral procession. Their feelings could hardly be contained when they were ordered to shout "*Vive le roi.*" The first platoon obeyed, but the tail of the column responded with "*Vive l'Empereur.*" They were cheered, but lukewarmly: there was already something embarrassing about the glories of yesterday.

Happily, along came the royal carriage, drawn by eight plumed horses, with the arms of France and Navarre, interlaced sprays of lilies, on the doors. The king, with gold epaulettes, shaped like finger biscuits, on his shoulders, his chest covered with ribbons and glittering with medals, which made him look stouter than ever, responded to the people's cheers by lifting a huge three-cornered hat with white feathers in it. By his side sat the Duchesse d'Angoulême, looking as stiff as a poker in a silver dress, as tight as a sheath, with a ruff round her neck. She had rouged herself to please the king. Louis was glad that the people should see his niece.

"Here she is!" he seemed to say—"the martyr's daughter, who was dragged to the Temple twenty-two years ago—that angel of goodness, the prop of my old age!"

He would have liked her to obtain a little of the popularity which is ill fortune's due. But the Duchesse sat impassive. For her Paris was rich only in terrible memories. She scarcely responded to the cheers, and the ladies of fashion could not help smiling at the absurd little bonnet she wore: it came from England, of course, for in Paris enormous hats were now prescribed by fashion. The other members of the royal family had only a moderate success. Angoulême committed the folly of appearing in the uniform of an English general. "Who's that?" people asked as he drove by. Berry seemed a cheery fellow enough,

THE ROYAL FAMILY

From a color engraving

(Carnavalet Museum)

but it was known that he had had words with the military men. Condé made the impression of being in his dotage: he stared to right and left as though stupefied.

To increase popular enthusiasm, commemorative medals of bronze and silver, and a few of gold, were flung into the crowd as the procession passed along. Before Henri IV's statue on the Pont Neuf—a bad, hastily moulded reproduction—pigeons, turtle-doves, and balloons adorned with *fleurs de lys* were released. Then came the *Te Deum* at Notre-Dame—the king under a canopy in the middle of the choir—women fainting with emotion under the old soldiers' sarcastic eyes— the triumphal exit and return to the Tuileries, where Louis XVIII took possession of the Emperor's rooms. He showed himself to the people yet again, blew kisses to them, placed a wreath of roses on his niece's head, embraced the Comte d'Artois—conscientiously executed, in short, all the symbolic gestures he had set himself to execute.

It was the same on the following days. When *Œdipus* was given at the Opéra, and the singer came to the words, "Lean on me, my beloved Antigone," the king pressed the Duchesse d'Angoulême to his heart with "*un regard tendre et ineffable*," which was greeted with roars of applause; and these were redoubled when the line came, "She has lavished tenderness and care on me." The audience was carried away with enthusiasm: the King of France of olden times had come back

to the head of his people as a father returns to his family after a long absence. "All is white, all is peace, hope and glory!" [1]

The festivities over, Louis XVIII took stock of the situation. He had not received as many marks of sympathy as he had expected. And yet he had assumed towards his subjects an attitude of wisdom and prudence which should conciliate the *bourgeoisie*, the shopkeepers who wanted to live in peace and make money, and the masses of the people, who were weary of war.

"My situation," he had said in his proclamation, "has no parallel in the world's history. If I am not a hero, I am an enlightened prince." Undoubtedly the Comte d'Artois, who had been in Paris before him, had had the benefit of the first wave of the people's joy, and he had only had what was left. But that did not explain everything.

He had no idea how strong the prejudices against him were. His return had coincided with the invasion, though that was none of his doing. He had arrived simultaneously with the Cossacks who dropped their lice in the Champs Elysées and the Tuileries, and this connection was enough for the simple souls who refused to believe that Frenchmen and not foreigners had recalled the Bourbons, and that the king's presence would deliver the country from the disasters of a for-

[1] Rochechouart, p. 358, Frénilly, p. 354. Medals of Louis XIV and Henri IV were seen at that time with the inscription, "XIV et IV font XVIII."

eign occupation. The facts could not be denied. In the streets of Paris were Austrians with boughs of green leaves in their shakos in token of victory: Cossacks in fur caps wearing medals commemorating the retreat from Moscow: society women seized with a "shameful excitement" at the sight of the barbarians: Napoleon's statue in the Place Vendôme covered with a shroud: and, in a carriage of the *ancien régime*, an old man "whose infirmity was caused by time and not by the war."

Relics of a bygone age seemed to spring from the earth. These were gentlemen in blue coats with powdered hair, with pigeon's wings and pigtail, watch-chain clinking on waistcoat and a little sword worn horizontally: grey-coated Vendeans, with the Sacred Heart sewn on the left of the breast: officers of Condé's army in sky-blue uniforms with silver lace and yellow facings. All these people, mingled with the foreigners who made Paris a regular Babel, filled the hotels, and in the Place Louis XV, only yesterday as melancholy and deserted as an old amphitheatre, dialogues like this were heard:

"Why! good-morning, Marquis!"

"Good-morning, Vicomte."

"Here you are then! how long have you been here? What are you going to do?"

The conversation then turned on their life as *émigrés*, the part they claimed to have taken in bringing back the royal family, and the decorations they were

about to obtain. These ghosts from past times reckoned their periods of "service" in months, as if they had never been interrupted. M. de Poix, captain of the guard, took his place in the king's carriage almost by force, claiming that his rights had only been in suspense since the Revolution! These strange people were nicknamed "Louis XIV's Light Infantry" and members of the Order of the Extinguisher. But, laughed at or not, they kept the centre of the pavements, thronged the anterooms of the Tuileries, drafted petition after petition, and, taking their orders from the Comte d'Artois, urged short shrift as in the Coblenz days.

"The Charter cannot be applied," they declared. "There is only one constitution: what the king wills, the law wills. Two or three good decrees, and we shall have order again."

The army and the Bonapartists had at first laughed at the ridiculous attitudes of the "Light Infantrymen"; but as time went by they became irritated.

"What right have these worthless fops, these soldiers who have never fought, this out-of-date aristocracy returned to us from abroad, to make demands? Is a powdered general of the *ancien régime* entitled to laugh at the old soldiers who have conquered Europe?"

Cartoons were secretly circulated; one representing the king on horseback behind a Cossack, crushing National Guards under his horse's hoofs, with burning

villages in the distance, and another showing two eagles and an eaglet flying away from the Tuileries and a flock of five geese waddling in.

Louis XVIII was too intelligent not to observe the ill-humour for which his brother was largely responsible. He ought, he told himself, to have left Hartwell earlier. His ministers said to him: "The country needs repose, and certain people choose this moment to embitter old hatreds and offend the national pride. It is ridiculous to suppose that a Revolution twenty-five years old can be wiped out by two or three signatures!"

The king listened politely. To repair the harm which had been done, he must attach the army more closely to him: he must continue the work begun at Compiègne and Saint-Ouen, where Marshal Ney had presented his children to him. The troops had astonished him by their fine bearing: he had expected to see brigands with hangdog looks, and had seen keen-faced, well-disciplined men. Nothing would have been easier for him than to honour the Guard, which had been brought to Paris from Fontainebleau, by reviewing it; but it never entered his mind, and the old soldiers, badly quartered and fed, strongly resented what they regarded as an insult. Soon afterwards a worse thing happened: Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld and a few other intimates of the Tuileries went and put a rope round the neck of Napoleon's statue in order to fling it down from its column.

The king, however, was then occupied with other

matters than public opinion. He had just revisited Versailles. He had passed through the *salons* and walked round the gardens without uttering a word, without giving vent to a single reflection. But from the time of this visit he had one well-defined idea, which took precedence of every other and seemed destined to be the corner-stone of his reign—to re-establish the king's household in its ancient splendour.

While the Bonapartist exasperation was growing, and the soldiers, ashamed of their passivity towards their foreign enemies, were calling the restoration "a halt in the mud," Louis was having the king's old edicts and regulations since 1574 laid before him. If he had listened only to his inclination, there would have been a revival of the *levers* and *couchers* at which his brother Louis XVI had appeared in such a ridiculous light: but his own ill-health, and the humiliation which his infirmities caused him, made him renounce the idea, and it was decided that instead of the *coucher* there would be the *Ordre*, a reception of the gentlemen who had the *entrée* to the royal chamber and the chief chamberlain on duty, who was to come to receive the password. Apart from this incidental reform, everything would be done henceforward as prescribed in the decree of 1780. "It is the simplest and most economical arrangement possible," the Comte d'Escars wrote, with no ironical intention. Moreover, as the king had neither wife nor children, the number of posts would be substantially reduced, which would make the new

system less expensive than the Imperial régime had been.

The economy, however, is not apparent when the personnel of the kitchen and pantry (*la bouche*) is enumerated. It amounted to 140, from the Sieur Gallet de Montdragon, permanent *maître d'hôtel*, with his staff of eight *sous-maîtres* and fourteen gentlemen of service, down to the porter Le Bœuf and the kitchen-maid Jeannette Leclerc. From the material point of view, the inheritance of the Empire was profitable enough: for example, Napoleon's cellar was a remarkable windfall. It consisted of about 6,000 bottles of rare wines from all the countries of Europe and Asia —a subterranean record of the conqueror's progress. Everything else was on the same scale as the kitchen. The captain of the mule-team, mounted grooms, keepers of the tennis court, pages' instructors, the officials charged with the duty of handing the newspaper to the king, *artilleur ordinaire* and arquebusier—all reappeared. The king's chapel was reorganised: so was his music, in connection with which the names of Lesueur, Cherubini, Spontini and Paër appeared.

Serious questions arose, however. Was a mounted groom entitled to two horses? Whose duty was it to appoint the heaters and lamp-lighters who did duty in the royal apartments? When the king was ill, who should receive and post up the bulletins? Should appointments be made to the posts of armchair-pusher, bone-setter, and operator for stone?

Blacas, who lived on a small intermediate floor above the king's room, worked all day long at the solution of these problems with his secretary, "an *abbé* of sickly appearance." He had before him, on one side, the lists of the personnel of the old régime drawn up in columns, on the other a pile of papers headed in a remarkable calligraphy. These were requests for posts, decorations, or financial assistance, letters from tradesmen begging to be allowed to state that they supplied the Court or to paint the arms of France on their shop-fronts, petitions from tax-farmers' sons and one from "the remnants of forty-eight families whose leading members had fallen beneath the revolutionary axe."

The former holders of office were anxious to recover their comfortable sinecures, and recalled themselves to the king's memory in the maudlin style fashionable at the moment. One writes, "When the sunrise of legitimacy began once more to shine upon France, I hastened, though scarcely eighteen years old, to augment the number of his Majesty's servants. . . ." Another asks if it is not natural that people who have escaped from torment should seek to resume "a service in which their happiness consists," they have, indeed, a special vocation for it. This was too just not to appeal to the king; but would there be enough posts available to satisfy so many faithful servants? The place-hunting under Louis Philippe has become notorious; but it was in every respect as bad in 1814.

Louis XVIII did things on a generous scale. The

old servants, and the *émigrés* who had shown peculiar devotion, were provided for. The old armchair-pusher was found and ordered to push as in the old days. Likewise the old operator for stone; indeed, the last-named functionary was given an assistant and placed in the category of surgeons after the Père Elisée, honorary surgeon and operator for the great and small apparatus.[1] Sometimes, of course, complications arose: time, usage and royal favours had got duties and prerogatives into a tangle, and it was a hard task to unravel them. And then Napoleon had come along and torn to pieces the domestic woof so splendidly woven by generations of kings. How could a clear distinction be drawn between the budgets of the civil list and the domains, since the *domaine national* and *domaine extraordinaire* had been created? Here a compromise with the past was clearly necessary. Blacas and his *abbé* sought the *via media:* and they were besieged by reformers and constitution-makers, "who had discovered the means of ensuring the prosperity of the Government and the happiness of the people." They proposed to create a college of heraldry, which would restore its ancient splendour to the nobility and bring the Treasury in twenty-four millions: to re-establish the lottery and the old fairs: to allow the export of merino; to merge theatrical companies into one single company, which would receive a universal and complete monopoly, a source of revenue: all these puerili-

[1] Methods used in operating for stone.

ties born of legitimist brains were humbly addressed to his Majesty, who, being "a Christian philosopher," was bound to understand the motives that prompted them. Blacas went through all this rubbish and noted in the margin, "reply politely," or reply "very politely," according to the would-be reformer's social status. As for the king, he found a satisfaction in signing (at last!) warrants on parchment—"*De par le roi*" etc.—or in reading essays on the gout specially dedicated to him.

The old institutions having been reconstituted, their functions had to be defined. "Royalty has always been a profession," said a report written for the benefit of Louis XVI: "indeed, a little charlatanism is required to make it really successful." The king attached great importance to this element of charlatanism. He had made a careful study of Court etiquette; he almost enjoyed its difficulties: and it was finally established under his supervision. The composition of the royal *cortège* at different hours of the day: the privilege of *grandes* and *petites entrées* to the king's bedroom, his study, the throne room, the first and second drawing-rooms: the honour of the *battans*, i.e. the opening of the folding doors wide or to only half their width, according to the visitor's rank: the arrangements for the religious ceremonies, the consecrated bread, the supper at which the king fed thirteen poor men and washed their feet: the great dinner on January 1st and St. Louis's Day—in short, all his Majesty's public

acts and appearances were provided for in their minutest details. And, to crown the work, Louis XVIII re-established the military household as it had existed under Louis XIV.

On June 15, 1814, the companies of grenadiers, *chavaux-légers*, grey and black musketeers, the Hundred Swiss, the gate guard and the provost's guard resumed their places at the Tuileries. In addition to the four companies of *gardes du corps* which had been sufficient for his predecessors, the king created two new ones, the command of which he gave to Marmont and the Prince de Wagram; thus the fusion of the royal and Imperial armies would be carried out from above. These companies formed a gilded troop of nearly 5,000 men. Sensible people pointed out that instead of spending so much money on spreading blue uniforms with scarlet facings, silver shoulder-knots, helmets lined with black silk and bearskin caps, at the gates of the Tuileries, the king would have done better to put the old army on a better footing and increase the number of officers. But for the ex-gentleman of Verona, the master of Hartwell, sumptuous surroundings came before all other considerations.

His receptions were certainly a fine spectacle. The guests of lower rank assembled in the hall of the marshals and that of the guards. The king only passed through these rooms. In the blue *salon* he was greeted by the *maréchaux de camp*, bishops and deputies: in the *salon de la Paix* by the lieutenant-generals and

archbishops: while only marshals, cardinals, ministers and peers had the *entrée* to the throne room. This elaborately graded protocol was accepted without qualification by the men, broken as they were to obedience and servility, but not by the women. The duchesses, received separately in the throne room, trampled under foot the young noblewomen of the Empire, who could not forgive them the possession of this privilege. The old Court dowagers, even the Duchesse d'Angoulême, were generally unpopular: their stiff manners, their barbarous style of dress, their decayed escort of "light infantrymen" [1] were the subject of light banter. The genuine aristocrats, for their part, treated the Imperial *parvenues*—shop girls, or even worse—with disdain. "I don't know that woman. She's a marshal's wife," one of them said. Indeed, the wife of Marshal Ney went home in tears over the insults to which she had been subjected at the Tuileries.

It was in this narrow domain of etiquette that discontent first raised its head. But the king and his friends seemed to take a pleasure in fanning it by committing blunder after blunder. The Legion of Honour was brought into disrepute by being distributed broadcast: the Cross of Saint Louis and Order of the Lily were given in quantities to Chouans and Vendeans: the military schools were closed and replaced by a school for young nobles. Every Royalist anniversary was celebrated with great pomp; funeral services were held

[1] See p. 180.

for Moreau and Pichegru, regarded by the Bonapartists as notorious traitors: a service, too, for Cadoudal, who had conspired against the First Consul[1]; while a subscription was raised for a monument at Quiberon.

At the same time, they were stupid enough to strike Bonaparte's name off the roll of members of the Academy: the priests declared in the pulpit that people who failed to restore property acquired during the Revolution would suffer the fate of Jezebel, and refused to take part in the burial of Mlle. Rancourt, an actress, which nearly caused a riot. The keeping of Sunday was enforced by decree, and the cafés were closed during service hours, which annoyed the soldiers, then for the most part anti-clerical. A Royalist, the Comte Ferrand, declared from the tribune that there were only two classes of Frenchmen—the *émigrés* who had brought back the king, and the *regnicoles* (natives). In other words, the men who had conquered Europe were "natives," Frenchmen of an inferior class. These "natives," soon afterwards, were informed that they would have to pay 30,000,000 francs to meet the debts of the Bourbons, and the pay of their spies and the agents they had employed to provoke civil war.

What had become of the king's shrewdness? Entrenched behind the Charter and Blacas, recumbent in his armchair, he seemed to see nothing, to be totally unaware of the existence of ten or twelve thousand

[1] These services, a contemporary records, were "so long that the living were suffocated while praying for the dead."

half-pay officers who lived in wretched rooms, four or five together, and "put on their only hat and their only frock-coat when they went out." The elements of rebellion were there. But he remained as placid and smiling as ever. His sleep was as peaceful as it had been in his youth. In his view, the hardest part of his task was surmounted; by the exercise of the mysterious power which he felt himself to possess, which made the allies tremble before him, which prevented the Tsar from asking of him the most ordinary of favours for one of his servants, he had protected the rights of France; and, by his prudence, he had restrained the Royalists from excesses. When his brother wanted to destroy Napoleonic emblems everywhere, he replied drily:

"If you say any more about it, I shall put his bust on my mantelpiece."

He had promised to bring peace, and he had done so. "The symbolic violets of the Empire," he said, "are included in the amnesty." Was not this ample proof of his generosity? And, better still, he rather liked the war of epigrams which the *Nain Jaune* waged against the "light infantrymen"; he seemed to breathe the air of the eighteenth century in reading the statutes of the Order of the Extinguisher or the witticisms aimed at his friends at the Tuileries.[1] Indeed, he

[1] For example: "May 6, 1814. Yesterday, after mass, the Bishop of Autun (Talleyrand) had the honour of presenting his wife to the son of St. Louis."

learned a great deal from that little opposition paper. As for his popularity, it was hard for him to doubt it when he received daily so many tokens of love and respect—odes and dithyrambs, translations of Horace fastened together with a blue bow and submitted for his patronage as a classical scholar; apologues in which the Royal swan strikes the Imperial vulture to earth. Some of these were the inspirations of the humblest poets, such as the author of the following alexandrines:

Sire, ton souffle pur embaume tous les champs:
Helas! que tes parfums sont odoriferants!

When any cloud on the horizon was pointed out to him, he waved his hands in the air. "It will all be cleared up," he said. When Marmont, one day when there was a gala performance at the Odéon, told him that he was afraid of a conspiracy, the king replied, "It is your business to protect me, and mine to go to the theatre and amuse myself." And thither he went, guarded by 10,000 men from the Tuileries to the Luxembourg. The incorrigible optimist of the five years of his exile had come to life again; he "gargled with the Charter" and sentimentalised over his own picture of a father reunited with his children. In the Council, he signed what he was asked to sign, and evaded discussion by saying "Oh, fix it up somehow," while all the Ministers pulled in different directions.

This policy of grandiloquence and beatitude bore the fruits that might have been expected of it. The die-hard Royalists could not forgive Louis XVIII for his moderation.

"What the country really needs," they said, "is several years of absolute despotism! The king cannot dispose of our property by the Charter: but nothing matters to him so long as he can eat, guess charades and write notes."

Blacas, with his haughty air and the curtness of speech he affected, became an object of detestation. He was held responsible for all the measures which "smelt of the Revolution"; in addition, many people wanted his post. The Minister Montesquiou was obliged to say to the king, "*On passe une maîtresse mais pas un favori.*" The "light infantrymen" held that such a régime could not last. Messengers were seen reading in the street instead of working. Just look at the rogues! That sort of thing was subversive of all morals.

The Bonapartists and the army disliked the new Government on other grounds! The Tuileries, where under Napoleon an atmosphere of military smartness prevailed, were now filled with the fumes of continual luncheon-parties; the crowds of menials vulgarised the master's house, and gluttony became the order of the day. The king, as was inevitable, was speedily nicknamed. At the artillery school, the gunners cried "*16, 17, 18 . . . comme un cochon,*" while at cards

the terms "*cochon de trèfle*" (clubs) and "*quinte au cochon*" were used. A general who devoted himself to plotting declared, "It's all the same to me so long as the pig goes."

This was only coarse levity: but there were more serious symptoms. The Napoleonic legend was taking shape in the popular mind, and Imperialist mysticism was gradually setting itself up against Royalist mysticism. A subterranean conspiracy came into existence which reproduced the bearing and language of the persecuted Christians. The soldiers of the old army, when they met, exchanged the phrases:

"Do you believe in Jesus Christ?" "Yes, and in his resurrection."

The former outbursts of ill-temper were now followed by a kind of silent meditation. A colonel was astonished at the obstinate taciturnity of his men. "It is like a convent," he wrote. "I would rather they misbehaved."

CHAPTER VII

INTERMEZZO

WHILE the diplomatists at Vienna were reconstructing the map of Europe and dancing, in France, the reawakening old world was coming into collision at every moment with the new world. "The Bourbons won't last six months; I am afraid you will come back to us this summer," Englishmen said to the Royalists. Indeed, thanks far more to the devoted efforts of the Comte d'Artois than to those of the king, the Restoration had put the clock of social progress back thirty years, and it was vain to repeat that "Bonaparte on the island of Elba is nothing but a corpse"; the corpse was still fresh.

On March 3, 1815, Masséna sent a despatch from Marseilles announcing that Napoleon had landed in the Golfe de Jouan. As the semaphore system then stopped at Lyons, the despatch only reached Paris about midday on the 5th. The corpulent Chappe hurried to M. de Vitrolles, Secretary of State, and told him, panting, to take the note he carried straight to the king: it contained important news. Louis XVIII,

who had gout in the hands, broke the seal with difficulty, and when he had read the note, said quite calmly to Vitrolles:

"Don't you know what it is? Bonaparte has landed on the coast of Provence. The despatch must be taken to the Minister for War."

At Vienna, Talleyrand called the unexpected landing an unpleasant incident; at the Tuileries the matter was taken more lightly. Monsieur was at vespers, and did not interrupt his devotions. In the evening he said with a charming smile, "By the way, what do you think of the great news?"

Blacas declared that there was no danger, and that if Napoleon advanced he would be cut to pieces.

"My dear Blacas," the king replied, "you are a very good fellow, but that does not make your judgment good. You have very often been mistaken in the past, and I am much afraid that you are deluding yourself this time as well."

The king's fears were justified. The Emperor had met the Prince of Monaco at Cannes and proposed that he should accompany him.

"But, Sire," said the Prince, "I am going home."

"So am I," said Napoleon.

It was perfectly true. The terms of his proclamation, "Victory will advance at the charge. The eagle, with the national colours, will fly from steeple to steeple till it reaches the tower of Notre Dame," were already known in Paris.

This had quite a different ring from the woolly periods with which the king was wont to regale his subjects. It was bold, sharp, thrilling; it echoed glory. Its vivid imagery carried the people away. The generals, who had joined the Bourbons from motives of prudence, tottered.

"We soldiers are libertines by nature," one of them confessed to Louis XVIII later: "if you are our legal wife, the Emperor is our mistress."

And they followed their mistress. The Royalist journals might lie all round the clock; the truth was that the Bonapartist invasion carried all before it.

In Paris, the king, disagreeable as his position was, pretended to be optimistic. "I beg you to report to your courts," he said to the ambassadors on March 7, "that my gout is much better and that I am not at all uneasy. We have an unexpected visitor in France, but I hope we shall not have him for long."

The same day he received Marshal Ney. Ney, exasperated at his master's return, which put him in a difficult position, gesticulated and shouted, with entire forgetfulness of decorum, "I hope I shall soon be able to bring him back to you in an iron cage!"

"I do not ask so much as that of him," the king observed in an undertone.

Meanwhile the Royalists became more and more uneasy. What was to be done if the brigand succeeded in re-entering Paris! Some wanted the king to leave for La Rochelle, where he would be near the

Vendée and Bordeaux; the great thing was that he should be on his native soil. Others, more courageous and with greater belief in the value of a gesture, talked of holding out in the Tuileries themselves with supplies and ammunition for three months. This was the heroic line to take; "by sacrificing his life," they said, "Louis XVIII would win the only battle in which he had ever taken part."

Blacas' advice was simpler. He proposed that Louis should go and meet the usurper in a carriage. But this did not appeal to the king. He declared in public that he would not leave his armchair, but in private he expressed himself differently.

"You want me to go and sit in the curule chair, do you?" he said, "I have no inclination of the kind."

He appeared in the Legislative Body on March 16. The sky was overcast and the rain fell in torrents, but the quays were crowded. He arrived at two o'clock to the sound of cannon and the music of military bands, between a double line of troops in full dress uniform, with the medal of the Legion of Honour on his breast—the first occasion, and that a belated one, on which he wore this decoration. Cheers rang out; there followed an interval of terrible, oppressive silence, during which "one seemed to hear the distant footsteps of the Emperor."

Then, in his firm, resonant, melodious voice, the king delivered a speech worthy of an ancient Roman. He was perfectly calm; the paper which he held in

his two fat hands never shook for a second. He feared, he said, not for himself but for France. Could he, nearly sixty years old, end his career better than by dying in defence of his people? He swore to maintain the Charter which decided the destinies of the French people: Monsieur did likewise, and the two brothers embraced. There was another outburst of enthusiasm, and the king was led, or rather carried, back to his carriage.

Ney, like so many others, had followed his mistress. On reading Napoleon's proclamation he had cried "This is how the king ought to write," and the man who had talked of bringing the usurper back in an iron cage went to support him with his name, his troops and his bravery. On March 17, the news of his defection, already suspected, was officially announced. Louis XVIII, who only the day before had said that "the fate of France depended on the marshal," was filled with consternation. His eyes and his whole face, a witness tells us, were red with anxiety.

"The scoundrel!" he said. "Is there no longer such a thing as honour?"

And although he had declared that he would be buried under the ruins of the monarchy, he secretly ordered preparations to be made for his flight.

Posters appeared on the walls of Paris urging the people to "fall upon Bonaparte"; and the loafers roared with laughter at the idea of the king with no legs falling upon the Little Corporal. An attempt

had been made to revive the loyalty of the troops by serving out wine to them and improving their rations; but after dinner, when the obligatory toast of the king's health had been drunk, they had shouted "*Vive l'Empereur!*" In the streets, half-pay officers chucked white-haired "light infantrymen" under the chin with the words, "What, marquis, not at Coblenz yet?"

Something resembling an anticipation of defeat was felt at the Tuileries. Although the *château*, to an outside spectator, retained its aspect of lonely magnificence, the atmosphere inside was feverish. The Crown diamonds, and the four millions from the Civil List, were packed up in three artillery ammunition boxes and placed under the escort of gendarmes disguised as postilions, who took the road to the north. The members of the royal family and their faithful adherents received money for their travelling expenses—"the king's service," as it was euphemistically called. Papers of a compromising nature, or which could not be taken away, were burned in such quantities that a chimney caught fire, and an uninformed visitor would have wondered whether the servants, soldiers and officials going up and down the staircases of the Pavillon de Flore had been seized by panic or were preparing for a festivity. From time to time old *émigrés* came to the doors to offer their services, two by two, covered with decorations and carrying muskets and halberds; they were politely shown out.

On March 19 the customary ceremonial was gone

through. The king gave his orders as usual, and when he passed through the *salons* on his way to mass, with his *gardes du corps* on each side of him, he was perfectly composed, though gloomy. At noon he reviewed his military household and ordered the National Guard to replace the troops of the line at the doors of the Tuileries. Then, while the servants were carrying boxes and getting the vans ready, and the musketeers were saddling and bridling their horses in the courtyard, he drew up a fresh proclamation to his ungrateful people explaining to them that he was leaving only to avoid bloodshed. Then serious last-moment problems arose. Should the king be conveyed to his carriage in a chair. "Where shall we find one big enough?" the Duc de Berry asked. Louis XVIII deigned to smile, and decided to leave at eleven o'clock.

It was a dark night, and rain fell unceasingly. Six large gilded carriages, all alike, were drawn up along the front of the Pavillon de Flore. There were crowds of *gardes du corps*, anxious to greet their master for the last time, in the hall, on the landings and the steps of the great staircase. The door leading to the *petits appartements* opened and the king appeared, in a thick winter overcoat, leaning on the arms of Blacas and the Duc de Duras. His face, fully illuminated by a torch borne by an usher, expressed such mingled majesty and grief that the spectators fell on their knees. There were a few stifled murmurs of "*Vive le roi!*" sobs, and an old servant's cry,

MARSHAL NEY

the only one uttered—"He is wearing the crown of thorns!"

The king said to Duras, "*Mon ami, allons . . .*" But he had scarcely descended three steps when he was stopped by the prostrate crowd, which kissed his hands and touched his clothes. He was put out at this; he feared that he would lose his composure.

"I had foreseen this," he said in a low voice to Blacas. "I did not want to see them. I ought to have been spared this emotion."

And he spoke to the people in order that they might let him through. "My children," he said, "I am touched by your attachment to me, but I need all my strength. Spare me, I beg you."

The great door opened, and a gust of wind rushed in, making the torch smoke and plunging the half-fainting king and the lamenting crowd for an instant in shadow. Outside were seen white cloaks and dark caps; the horses snorted, and the six gilded carriages, all alike, left Paris by the Arc de Triomphe in the pouring rain. Silence reigned again everywhere—in the *château*, the Court, the barracks, the great houses of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. A loneliness, instinct with foreboding, prevailed. There was no sound in the echoing streets but the tread of the soldiers, whose white cockades were now hidden under bunches of violets.

At nine o'clock the next evening a post-chaise drew up before the Pavillon de Flore, and the Emperor,

carried by his soldiers amidst a crowd wild with excitement, entered the throne room, whose *fleurs de lys* had already disappeared to be replaced by the Imperial bees.

Napoleon was the latter-day Christ who had said to the latter-day paralytic, "*Surge, tolle lectum tuum*" ("Arise and take up thy bed"). Louis XVIII's carriage was now bowling northward, over a muddy, treeless plain, along a road like a great yellow stripe across a grey cloth, tapering towards the horizon. Through the window the king could see the white cloaks of his guards, and sometimes, towards the south, the tricolour plumes of Bonaparte's lancers, who were watching his retreat.

His morale, however, was now better. At Abbeville, he was sufficiently at leisure to appreciate the truffles and wine which were set before him. At Saint-Pol, he lodged in the house of a poor woman who placed a common piece of tapestry under his feet. Such attentions as these were pleasant to him.

At Lille, however, the scene changed: although the population seemed friendly, the troops were sullen and mistrustful. He was alarmed. Should he go on, or not? His attendants hesitated: Blacas argued that he must stay till next day at any rate, for otherwise his departure would look like flight. The king was shaving when his favourite entered the room.

"I shall be ready in a minute," he said.

"We are not going."

The king put down his razor and swore like a heathen, his half-lathered face red with anger:

"Why do you change your mind every minute, and prevent me either from starting or from going to bed?"

He finished shaving and unbuttoned his waistcoat, grumbling. Everything was going badly: his shirts had been stolen, and he had none too many before; he had lost his slippers, and, as he explained to Marshal Macdonald, "You will know some day what it means to lose slippers which have taken the shape of your foot!" A more serious question was whether the military household had stampeded or would rejoin him. In the midst of all this to-do, Condé, whose ideas were somewhat confused, asked the king the timely question whether on the following day, Maundy Thursday, he would perform the ceremony of the washing of feet!

The decision had to be made whether the king and his party should make for Ostend or England. His philosopher's instinct would have led the king straight to Hartwell, but, under pressure from his advisers, who declared that to go to England would be injurious to his cause, he decided on Ghent, and despite the entreaties of the people, who flung themselves on their knees in his way, he crossed the frontier at Menin. In the meantime the military household, pressed but not attacked by the Emperor's troops, had got bogged in the Flanders plains and abandoned its guns and horses. Artois and his son, the Duc de Berry,

endeavoured to regroup it, and, failing in this, simply dissolved it at Béthune.

This disorganization was not reflected in the entry into Ghent. The Belgians, who had no love for the Empire on account of conscription and the *droits réunis*, heartily cheered the exiled prince who arrived in state in a coach drawn by six horses. A fine house belonging to the Comte d'Hane de Steenhuyse, with its front ornamented with Corinthian pillars, had been assigned to him as his dwelling-place. He went over his new property. There was a splendid drawing-room with an inlaid parquet floor, five large rooms, and a wide balcony in front of the raised ground floor, whence he could show himself to the people. He expressed his satisfaction, and, being hungry, consumed a hundred oysters for his dinner.

While, at Bordeaux, the Duchesse d'Angoulême, "the only man in the family," was endeavouring to raise the people in favour of the Bourbons and crying shame on the troops for their ingratitude; while the Emperor in Paris was finding to his astonishment that feeling against the nobles and priests was as strong as it had been at the beginning of the Revolution; while politicians like Fouché were preparing to serve the usurper and the monarchy at the same time, and literary men like Benjamin Constant, after having insulted "the bloodstained man," were coming to place their talents at his disposal, Louis XVIII was organising his provincial court. About 700 officers and

soldiers of his military household had rejoined him, forming a handsome enough frame for his person. At four o'clock daily he assembled his Council of Ministers—Ministers *in partibus*, for only Jaucourt, in charge of foreign affairs, had any occupation; then he went for a walk on the ramparts, whence there was a pleasant view over the fertile, well irrigated country; and sometimes he called a halt at a little inn called the Strop, where they cooked fish uncommonly well.

The waiting attitude he was compelled to assume at the gates of his own country did not seem irksome to him; he attributed the blame for it not to his own imprudence, but to Bonapartist intrigues. He was not an exile or a fugitive—by no means; he had simply changed his residence. Although he had no people to govern, he legislated into the air, had an official newspaper and even thought of starting a little satirical paper to amuse his entourage. For the Court was reconstituting itself, and the cliques too. Artois had his set and the king his: and of an evening, the avenues of the Kauter, with the ladies in spring costumes, the gentlemen carrying their white-cockaded opera hats under their arms, and the Court *abbés* in their round hats, might have been the Luxembourg. Newly arrived travellers, who brought with them the news and gossip of the capital, were much sought after: Guizot, for example, who had his pockets full of plans, and also, a rare thing in a sober Protestant, of Royalist songs: Louis, the "libertine priest," and a

financial expert; and Chateaubriand, who railed in one breath against the scantiness of the accommodation—they had tried to make him sleep in the same room as his wife—and against the sham great man, the *parvenu* to glory, "the son of an Ajaccio usher to whom France had given the heritage of Robert the Strong."

But this state of felicity did not last. The king had not brought a treasure away with him, no more had his servants, and time was passing. The Comte d'Artois' pension had to be cut down, and the suborning of deserters to augment the "royal troops." The king, nevertheless, tried to keep up appearances. He invented a new order, that of Fidelity, and ordered royal commissioners to be sent to the armies who would know how to appeal to "*ces âmes fortes et susceptibles*"—i.e., Bonaparte's old soldiers; he likewise addressed to the same soldiers who had mutinied against him superb manifestoes which never reached their destination. When Wellington, the commander-in-chief of the British troops, passed through Ghent, he said to him cordially, "You are my best doctor," but afterwards dismissed him with a patronising little nod, just as he did everybody else.

The allies were displeased at his airs of a miniature Charles V, and his arrogance which grew in proportion to his abasement. A phantom ministry, a farcical paper, a Lilliputian army commanded by blunderers who raised their voices in vain at general headquarters

at Alost—it all seemed out of keeping at the moment when the great throw was about to be made.

At the end of April the king fell ill. He had good reason. The Duc de Bourbon, sent to raise the Vendée, had failed lamentably, Bordeaux had declared for the Emperor, and the French troops were concentrating in the north. Indeed, as Artois said, these events were not calculated to improve the digestion. The strollers in the Kauter grew bored. How long the days were; and how short money was!—wretched meals at three francs, no carriages, uncomfortable lodgings. It was no longer sufficient distraction for them to discuss the report which Chateaubriand had just written on the situation in France—"idle stuff which can only do harm," a diplomatist called it. But other preoccupations were in store for them.

On the evening of June 16, the sound of cannon was heard. The silver plate and valuables were sent to Antwerp. The Duc de Berry led the so-called royal army back from Alost to Ghent and blew up a bridge in his retreat, which brought down upon him the following rebuke from Wellington:

"When one runs away, Monseigneur, one must not make the route impracticable for good soldiers who may be obliged to carry out an honourable retreat."

Amid the general panic, Louis XVIII was perfectly calm. "Those who are afraid can go," he said: but when the news arrived that Napoleon had gained a success at Quatre-Bras, he had his carriages made

ready. On the 18th, when a rumour of a French victory had spread through the town, he continued to conceal his uneasiness under a mask of tranquillity: but in truth, "the legitimate succession lay at Hane de Steenhuyse's house like a broken-down old waggon."

As no official report had arrived in the evening, Louis XVIII refused to go to bed: although tormented by his gout, he walked from his armchair to the window alone, with strained ears, panting and sighing. Had he come to Ghent to see all his hopes destroyed at one blow? Had he gone through so many years of exile, with such stubbornness and patience, made so many concessions to the new world which tradition and upbringing made detestable to him—only that this catastrophe might be the end? Yes, the war was, as the English minister Pitt had said, a war for life—Napoleon's or his. Were the Bourbons, then, finally condemned by France and by Providence? And was he, an old man, to become once more a wanderer on the high roads, the plaything of fate? The night of June 18 was, on a much lower plane, Pascal's night—the night in which a man conducts a dialogue with himself, bluntly interrogates himself, and confesses himself. The idea that he might have been mistaken, might have acted wrongly towards those who should have been his strength, gradually crept into his mind; he was, perhaps without being aware of it, slowly invaded, as it were, by the consciousness of his responsibility.

In the courtyard horses neighed, men-servants bustled about, and his loyal subjects murmured words of discouragement in the gloom. . . . But at about two o'clock in the morning a messenger from Wellington announced the destruction of the French army at Waterloo. Then the king went to bed.

The game was won. He left Ghent without apparent haste, showed himself in the illuminated town, drank the health of the allies who had fought "not Frenchmen, but Bonapartists," and hailed their victory without an idea that he was insulting his country. Blacas was ordered to congratulate Wellington. He did so, with difficulty: but it was his last task. Everyone demanded that he should be sacrificed. The bewigged minister who had the monopoly of the king's confidence and, worse still, was incorruptible, was disliked even by the allies. He was blamed for everything that went wrong, and not a voice was raised in his favour; he was one of the gang who were always at the monarch's heels and made him unapproachable. The Ghent scare demanded that he should be made a victim. After a timid attempt to defend him, Louis XVIII allowed his hand to be forced.

"He will grow accustomed to doing without me," said Blacas philosophically, "and will find a new object for his affection. I shall be forgotten in a month."

But Waterloo was to have further consequences for the king.

On the way to Paris, he explained the situation to the people. Thank God, neither he nor his family had been willing to join the instruments whom Providence had employed to punish treason; he returned with clean hands, without a bloodstain. He was at once free and fatherly in his remarks to the girls who welcomed him, as on his landing at Calais. "The sight of your youthful charms," he said, "makes me regret still more that I am an old man." Around him the *gardes du corps*, reassured and newly clothed, shouted: *"Vive le roi! Vivent les belles!"* He abandoned himself to the enjoyment of his popularity. He shut his eyes to the burned cottages and homeless peasants, and raved about the excellence of a rabbit's back which was served up to him in the village of Lihus.

At Saint-Denis there was an incident. The headmistress of the "Imperial School for young ladies" consented to give up to him her own room on the ground floor, which delighted him, for he hated staircases: but the young ladies, for the most part daughters of Bonapartists, refused to wait on the king and his suite as they were requested to do, and discipline had to be enforced. This affair was a crystallisation of the difficulties of the moment, which were manifested on a large scale by two men of the new world, Talleyrand and Fouché.

The first-named had just defended the rights of France in Vienna: he had discharged his task stubbornly, assisted by a remarkable intelligence and a haughtiness, an arrogance indeed, which was surprising in a man of his aspect—pallid, with lustreless eyes and flabby flesh, and, to crown all, lame. When the Tsar said to him that the Bourbons were incapable of reigning, he replied, leaning on his crutch: "Sire, they have got to reign all the same."

Louis XVIII did not care for him. On his return in 1814 he had received him most ironically, now, after Ghent, with marked coldness; but he could not quarrel with the only diplomatist who had the ear of foreign courts. Talleyrand returned and spoke out. The Restoration, he said, had made mistakes, and ought to recognise them in the proclamation which the king was about to address to his people. The Comte d'Artois protested violently against such a plan, which he declared to be a degradation of royalty. "Monsieur has done a great deal of harm," Talleyrand replied with that terrible calm which, according to one of his contemporaries, gave him something in common with the cold-blooded creatures.

On this the Duc de Berry cried out that he would not allow his father to be treated in such a way. Louis XVIII ordered him to be silent. He knew quite well that the lame man was really right, and that this *mea culpa* was the second ticket of admission for which he had got to pay before he could again sit

down in the Tuileries. In his proclamation, indeed, he accused himself, but in the form of an expression of doubt, to avoid loss of prestige. It was not his last concession.

The regicide Fouché had been conducting home affairs since March 20. The king's government had tried to arrest him before leaving for Ghent, but he had escaped by a secret door—and Napoleon had made him a minister. After Waterloo he found himself master of the situation, for he had spared the Royalists and had the former revolutionaries, the Jacobins, in his hands. Should the king treat with him? Talleyrand advised him to do so, but Louis, striking the two arms of his chair, had replied with a "Never!" which seemed to settle the matter once for all. But he had to swallow it: and, which made matters worse, Fouché did not approach the king, he was approached himself. All parties, even Monsieur's, agreed in recognising him as the indispensable man, the necessary evil; he alone could preserve the Bourbons from a second fall, enchain the revolutionary hydra which ceaselessly raised its heads, and ensure perfect peace in the capital. The Liberals, on their side, saw in him a bulwark against the return of the reaction and the *émigré* spirit.

The king, however, would not yield. Then he was confronted with a dilemma; he must accept either Fouché or the tricolour cockade. If the minister was definitely repugnant to him, what risk was there in

hoisting the colours he had worn long ago? The question was adroitly put: for Louis XVIII was uncompromising where emblems were concerned: his inmost self revolted against the idea of abandoning the traditional symbol of royalty. It was possible that in 1792 he had put on a wretched bauble to master the Revolution and save his own life; but now nothing in the world would make him put on the colours of a rebel nation. The military leaders who had joined him, such as Masséna, continued to press him. "Those colours are very antiquated," he replied, and Artois outdid him. "I would rather take mud and put it on my hat," he said.

The matter was settled. The king thought that it was easier to get rid of a minister than of a flag, but when he saw the decree appointing Fouché on the table before him, the blood rushed to his head and he fell back quite overcome, his back making a bulge in the stuff of the armchair. What a humiliation, what an insult to the memory of the martyrs, that after having for years posed as Louis XVI's avenger, and publicly excluded the regicides from his clemency, he should now have to make one of them a minister! He remained silent for some minutes, during which he doubtless saw, in a flash, all the tribulations of his life: then he sighed, "Oh, my unhappy brother!" took up his pen, and signed.

A few hours later Talleyrand entered the king's study at Saint-Denis. On his arm was a tall man,

with whitish bloodshot eyes, and in his bearing a suggestion of ferocity, elegance and agility which made him resemble a panther. It was Fouché, Duke of Otranto, the ex-monk and guillotiner turned king-maker.[1]

The new minister began to assert himself at once. In his opinion, the king's re-entry into Paris was by no means an easy matter; the white cockade and the cheers of the *gardes du corps* might cause disturbances. The military household must be ordered not to repel by force any attack that might be made. The route proposed seemed to him injudicious: the *faubourg* Saint-Denis, with its narrow streets and workmen's dwellings, was dangerous; the rue de Clichy would be better. But Louis XVIII did not accept his view.

"I am glad to say that I am not afraid of my people," he said, "and I shall enter by the *faubourg* Saint-Denis."

Then Fouché, judging that he had kept his sovereign waiting long enough at the gates of his capital, gave him free rein, "and Jesus Christ was not better received in Jerusalem than the king in Paris."

It was July. Fearing the heat, or animated, perhaps, by a belated prudence, Louis XVIII had not

[1] Chateaubriand tells us that Louis XVIII asked him what he thought of Fouché's appointment. "I think it is the end of the monarchy," he said. There was a pause, then the king said, "Well, M. de Chateaubriand, I am of the same opinion as you are."

had his carriage uncovered: but the crowd, whether it could see him or not, cheered him and sang the popular songs of the moment, "*Vive Henri IV!*" and "*Rendez-nous notre père de Gand.*" The women, dressed in white and carrying bouquets of lilies, did not dream of seeing anything ridiculous in the returned travellers from Belgium, weirdly accoutred as they were—the chancellor Dambray with his little round hat and riding-boots, Chateaubriand "with his long Damascus sword fastened to his frock-coat by a red cord." The die-hards pointed out that their master did not fear to return in full daylight, whereas the usurper had waited for nightfall. They had short memories, and had all too easily forgotten the flight of March 19.

When Louis XVIII appeared on the balcony of the Tuileries, a sergeant of the National Guard advanced to kiss his hand, and the actor Huet presented him with a banner on which was inscribed "*Vive notre Père de Gand!*" The crowd was wild with enthusiasm. The king attempted to speak, but—whether from genuine or from stage emotion it is impossible to say—he could only utter the words "My friends . . ." In the evening, the streets were illuminated as though by an enchanter's touch, and, while the *gardes du corps* went to break up the Café Montansier, a Bonapartist haunt where lampoons against the Bourbons were composed, the Parisians danced on the lawns of the Tuileries, in front of the Arch.

"I cannot believe that the French like being defeated so much," wrote an Englishman, surprised by all this enthusiasm.

The presence of the conquerors was to have a sobering effect on the thoughtless crowd, equally ready to acclaim Emperor or King. The flowers were not withered, and the white flags and candle-ends were still in their places along the avenues, when the three foreign monarchs, Russian, Austrian and Prussian, entered Paris. They arrived with no tender feelings in their hearts; they were no longer "the generous allies of 1814," but old soldiers weary of fighting an indomitable people, breathing hatred and nourishing schemes of vengeance. In this the Prussians took the lead. Napoleon's brigands—the army which had withdrawn beyond the Loire—must be exterminated, killed like dogs: the "impious country" must be dismembered, plundered: this would be the task of the brave Teutons. The Russian was less brutal, but he was profoundly exasperated with the Bourbons, who could learn nothing from experience and whose mistakes would without doubt lead to fresh crises. It would, he considered, be safer, in the interests of the peace of Europe, to put an Orleanist prince, more democratic and in no way compromised, on the throne.

Paris was made to feel the conquerors' animosity. The king, from the Tuileries, could see the Cossacks encamped in the courtyard, hanging out their linen to dry on the gates, and "the white overcoats of the Aus-

trians closing the Carrousel entrance," while the Arc de Triomphe was stripped of its ornamentations, and in the distance stood cannon trained and the gunners beside them with lighted fuses.

"Whom is it meant for?" he said. "I will never believe that the sovereigns have authorised anything of the kind."

It was meant for the whole of France, Napoleon's France, which had been victorious for too long. The demands of the Prussians reached the point of insult. They attacked the national monuments; Field-Marshal Blücher ordered that the Pont d'Jena, which commemorated a defeat of his country, should be blown up. When Talleyrand informed Louis XVIII of this, he at once wrote, in a natural access of emotion:

"If it comes to that, I will go and stand on the bridge, and they can blow me up if they like."

This threat quite failed to intimidate Blücher, who regarded the destruction of the bridge as a question of national honour. Wellington, the victor of Waterloo, intervened, as did also the Tsar. But the Prussian engineers were already boring the chambers in preparation for the blowing up, and three explosions took place without doing any damage, as though the bridge, a relic of the Empire, were too strong for the invaders' cowardly attempt on it. Louis XVIII continued to offer his life, reiterating that the Prussian action was a detestable violation of international law and of

treaty rights.[1] He even emerged from the Tuileries, but found no more soldiers on the bridge; the king of Prussia himself had ordered Blücher to stop the work. On that day the exile of Hartwell truly regained contact with his people; the cheers which greeted him when he returned unostentatiously to the *château* had an unusually genuine ring.

The trials which were to put the seal on his new union with his subjects, and gradually raise him to the position of national sovereign, were far from being at an end. France is too rich, the Russian said: the more cash we extract from her the more secure we shall be. Another of the invaders declared that it was scandalous to see Frenchwomen covered with diamonds and finery. If the monuments were not blown up, the people could at least be ruined.

At this outburst of hatred the ultra-Royalists lost their heads and openly attacked the king, who dared to take into his service the instruments of the Revolution and the Empire—Talleyrand, "a married priest who dragged about with him not only his leg, but a criminal past," and a horrible fellow like Fouché. The latter was no longer an indispensable minister, recommended by the Comte d'Artois to his brother on grounds of commonsense. The *gardes du corps* insulted him in the streets; at the same time they furi-

[1] It was laid down in the agreement for the capitulation of Paris that "public property shall be respected," but Blücher had had the words "except such as relates to the war" added.

ously attacked the most trivial emblems of the Napoleonic tyranny; carnations were particularly objectionable to them! At the theatre, they booed Mlle. Mars, who was suspected of Bonapartism, and applauded Mlle. Bourgoing, whose views were orthodox. The views which they held, consciously or otherwise, are crystallised in a caricature which shows Louis XVIII receiving a bundle of rods from the King of Prussia to chastise the French with, a knout from the Emperor of Russia, and a whip with iron points affixed to the tip from the Emperor of Austria. Such was the lesson they wished the king to learn.

The wisdom of his own entourage was not on a higher level.

"You cannot imagine how stupid the Comte d'Artois is," Talleyrand confided to his friend Thibaudeau. "All these Bourbons are idiots except Louis XVIII."

These were disagreeable words, and their motive, in any case, is open to suspicion. It is undeniable, however, that Condé was falling into his dotage. When receiving Talleyrand, who had formerly been Bishop of Autun, he said to him, all trembling: "Your views are listened to; could you not tell his Majesty that he ought to get rid of that Bishop of Autun whom he has about him?"

The Duchesse d'Angoulême, just like Artois, was persuaded that the ministers were traitors and were distributing money to incite the people to revolt. In her opinion the only safe course was to appoint old and

tried Royalists, and she pressed this view on her uncle, who replied, "I know my business." There were painful scenes: the Duchesse left the king's study with red eyes and convulsed features and returned to her rooms, where she received no one but ex-*émigrés* and spent her time in sewing together the blank pages of letters received at the chancery to make notebooks, which she had sold for the benefit of poor Royalists. The days of affectionate family scenes, of the Antigone of Mitau, were long past.

In the South, at Avignon, Nîmes, and Toulouse, the White Terror was raging. The partisans of the Empire, or persons suspected of being such, were massacred. Marshal Brune and General Ramel were murdered with the approval of the Royalists. "Some heads must fall," they said, "a few drops of blood must be shed to save torrents."

Louis XVIII fulminated against summary executions, arguing that the punishment of Bonapartist crimes was a national affair, which must be carried out in a formal, orderly manner; but the situation was beyond his control. He had been obliged, whether he would or no, to hand over nineteen generals for trial by court-martial for treason, and that when fifty-eight departments were still occupied by the enemy, and the Prussians were continuing to slaughter and pillage.

In August, 1815, his position became still more difficult. A formidable ultra-Royalist majority arrived in the Chamber, applauded by Artois and his set, who

had not hoped that the elections would produce such good results. For the king they were too good; he felt himself shut in on all sides, the prisoner of the men of the old régime. Ever since Ghent he had been beginning to understand the dangers of the *émigré* spirit. Fouché, having given his enemies a handle, was dismissed, at the instance of Talleyrand. "I have wrung his neck," the latter said. But Talleyrand himself, whose sacrifice was demanded by the extremists, was not slow to follow his victim. He was compelled to resign in accordance with the English procedure. The corpse dragged the dying man with it.

Talleyrand's place was now vacant. But who would be able to defend the rights of France against the allies? The king resisted attempts to influence him, and appointed the Duc de Richelieu, a former *émigré*, governor of Odessa and a personal friend of the Tsar. "An excellent choice," Talleyrand remarked. "There is no one in France who knows the Crimea so well as M. de Richelieu." But, little as he meant it, the disgraced diplomatist spoke the truth. Richelieu considered that he had dishonoured himself by signing the treaty which Europe imposed: he had, nevertheless, obtained the least severe terms possible from the victors. The king's choice had, in truth, been an excellent one.

France was now at peace with Europe, but she was far from being at peace within herself. The fugitives

of Ghent were not content with the execution of the young General La Bedoyère. They thirsted for vengeance as men do who have been a prey to humiliating panic; in this respect they were almost at one with the allies. As in 1793, names were wanted. The king's study was inundated with denunciations; if these devoted informers were to be believed, the whole administration, from the prefects down to the most minor officials, was exclusively composed of suspects. The most trivial remark about the king was first distorted and then made the subject of inquiry, and its author was sent to prison. Daunou, the keeper of the archives, supplied a list of the members of the Convention who had voted for the king's death. This was a sign of the times. Now and again an informer was a reformer as well, and indicated a means of curing the moral ills from which France was suffering, and preserving order. It was suggested, for example, that the king should enlist an army of Montenegrins, "really independent mountaineers." Why not Janissaries?

The man on whose head the whole accumulated burden of hatred fell was Ney. He had taken refuge in the Cantal, in the *château* of a female relation. A Royalist denounced him, and the *château* was surrounded. The fugitive, looking out of a window, saw an officer of gendarmerie.

"Whom do you want?" he asked.

"Marshal Ney."

"Come up here, sir, and I'll show him to you."

And he gave himself up.

When Louis XVIII heard the news, he cursed the prefect's energy. "A blunder that will cost us dear!" he said: then, his thoughts turning to Ney himself, he added, "Confound the fellow! he will do us more harm by letting himself be caught than he did on March 13 by going over to Bonaparte." In his heart he almost found excuses for the Marshal's treason: he had still been loyal when he left the king's study, and had meant to remain loyal to the end, but the situation had been stronger than his resolve.

The ultras did not take so magnanimous a view of the matter; they wanted an execution with all due formalities, and were exasperated at the slowness of the trial. The very thought that Ney might escape transformed the gentlest women into furies. "They mustn't keep him waiting," one of them cried, "nor us either!" Foreigners used similar language; if the French were incapable of punishing the traitor, the allies would do it themselves; they would take him and deport him to Siberia. Of the king's ministers, Richelieu, as a rule so sensible and just, let himself be carried away by the eager insistence on Ney's death, and he urged the Chamber of Peers to give judgment on the Marshal in the name of Europe. The public prosecutor Bellart, an old professional lawyer who had served the Empire and the Restoration with the same verbose devotion, who had been intoxicated with love of the dynasty on the birth of the King of Rome and

vehemently hostile to Napoleon in 1814, was anxious to make an end of the business at once without even respecting the rights of the defending counsel.

The king's good sense was revolted by this general outburst of fury. He dared not pardon the prisoner, but he foresaw the ultimate effects of his execution.

Ney's death—a magnificent death, full of nobility and courage, without a trace of boasting—wiped out at a stroke the errors of his life. Henceforth the soldiers idealised him and worshipped him along with the Emperor. As someone said, "the Restoration had cleansed him with his own blood."

On the very day that Ney fell to the bullets of the firing party in the avenue of the Observatory, an old *émigré*, paying court to the Duc de Berry, said to him with a charming sense of parody, "Just two or three more little hangings, Monseigneur, and France will be at your feet." One of the expected hangings was that of Lavallette, director of the Post Office, who had been condemned to death for usurpation of public functions and an attempt on the king's person in the previous March. Many would have liked to save him, for he was popular. The king would have commuted his sentence if the Duchesse d'Angoulême had interceded for him; but that lady, warned by Richelieu, refused, and when Madame de Lavallette threw herself at her feet and handed her a petition, she gave her a furious glance and withdrew.

"I foresaw it," Louis XVIII sighed, "*they* are merciless; but if I stood up to them, I should not have another moment's peace."

The lot of the Emperor's faithful adherent was decided, and the king replied to fresh entreaties only by academic phrases.

"I am sorry for you, Madame," he said, "but I can do nothing but my duty."

But the ultras were much disturbed when they heard that Lavallette had borrowed his wife's clothes and escaped. There was universal joy: the people would have illuminated the streets if they had dared. The street singers composed ballads glorifying the prisoner and insulting the king.

The temper of the ultras did not improve, and Louis XVIII was extremely annoyed. "You will see," he said, "they will say it is our doing." Decazes, who had succeeded Fouché as head of the police, despatched his bloodhounds in all directions. "Lavallette must be found without fail," Richelieu wrote to him, "or the results will be terrible." But Lavallette could not be found— he had, as a matter of fact, taken refuge in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs itself—and the results were indeed terrible. Massacres in the provinces, a stupid execution and a romantic escape—the Restoration was making a bad start.

The king tried in vain to exercise a calming influence; he found his entourage a handful. The Duc de Berry in particular indulged in brutalities of speech

and conduct which might have been extremely dangerous. One day he cried: "We'll start a marshal hunt. We must kill eight at least." The saying was reported to Louis XVIII, who rebuked his nephew severely.

"You will get my dynasty turned out," he said: "if you go on like this I shall send you away from Paris."

On another occasion Berry flew into a rage with a colonel of the guard and tore off his epaulettes. The colonel, infuriated, put his hand on his sword-hilt, but the king, who was present, checked him with a gesture, and said:

"Colonel, my nephew has just removed your epaulettes because he knew that I intended you to wear those of a general."

Thus he learned to play the rôle of good-natured composer of differences: under the pressure of political exigencies, he became once more the moderate man willing to compromise which had been his pose before the Revolution and down to 1792. The violence of his own family made him all the more determined to follow a prudent course. What he desired above all things was peace among his subjects, a moderate policy on the part of the Government, and the evacuation of the occupied territory at the earliest possible moment. Only on these conditions could he govern as he meant to govern, peaceably and paternally, as befitted a monarch in his declining days. And when his entourage

gave him leisure for such things, he replied to the addresses sent him with old-fashioned politenesses and morsels of kingly rhetoric which made deplorable reading beside the Emperor's letters.

CHAPTER VIII

POLICY AND SENTIMENT

IN the great stone hall of the Tuileries, the fifes and drums of the Hundred Swiss made a deafening noise. An usher in an embroidered red coat advanced with his ivory wand in his hand; behind him came a procession of valets in livery carrying long-shaped baskets with silver lids; and a few *gardes du corps* in full uniform brought up the rear. "The king's meat" was going up from the kitchen to the dining-room. The cup-bearers *(officiers du gobelet)* had already carried in the vessel containing the napkins and the table-service, the padlocked case containing the knife, spoon and fork reserved for his Majesty's use, the bread, and the wine, from the Chambertin, Lafitte and Sillery to the rarer wines—Cyprus, Malaga, Pacaret and Tokay.

The meat having been ceremonially conveyed to its destination, the king appeared, immaculately powdered, with his fat, high-coloured face.[1] He took his

[1] When his portrait by Gros was exhibited, someone composed these lines:

Gros l'a peint
Plein de force et de vie . . .
En le voyant tout le monde s'écrie:
Gros l'a peint!

seat in a big armchair, and the other diners, including the Duchesse d'Angoulême, on seats with no arms. The two chief dishes were placed before him. He had formerly carved himself, which, like his brother Louis XVI, he did perfectly; it was a family gift. Now all he did was to offer some of the chief delicacy to each diner, addressing him by name. He himself was not forgotten. He was particularly fond of mutton cutlets, which were boned for him and served in such a way that he could swallow them at a mouthful, and also of truffles cooked *au champagne*, which he ate burning hot. Before the end of the meal he had a glass of sweetened wine carried to each diner. If the guest was there for the first time, he asked what kind of wine he preferred, but, this preference once noted, the glass arrived ever after without any inquiry being made—so good was the jolly monarch's memory.

The king's dinner-table performances were generally known, and his gluttony had become proverbial. In the account of his flight in 1792 which he had just published, "grub" played a conspicuous part, and bad jokers said in bad verse,

Tout nous annonce que l'auteur
Doit etre un roi restaurateur.

This undeniable tendency was encouraged by his doctor, Père Elisée. The latter was a strange person. His real name was Talochon. He had originally been

a brother of the Charité at Grenoble, but had unfrocked himself during the Revolution and lived with a succession of women, each of whom in turn became Mère Elisée. He had been at Quiberon, and in the record of the persons compromised by participation in that affair he was noted as being very dangerous. Louis XVIII had met him in exile and attached him to himself, for he possessed remarkable remedies for the gout, notably some infallible "*bilules*." He talked as if he had a permanent cold in the head.

Installed at the Tuileries, the Rabelaisian ex-monk led a comfortable life; he ate and drank copiously, was a privileged intimate of the king, who liked his familiarity and his racy stories, and was tolerated even by the Duchesse d'Angoulême. He unearthed pleasant lady friends for himself in Paris, and certain sequestered parts of the *château* were declared by prudes to be the scene of disgusting orgies. At any rate, the Père loathed staying at Saint-Cloud, where no doubt he enjoyed less freedom; and he assured the king that the air of that place was not good for him.

Attempts had been made to undermine his position. Pamphlets emanating from the faculty of medicine at Montpellier had represented him in an unfavourable light, but the Père had immediately written to the Prefect of Police declaring that his name must not be taken in vain; the jealous doctors had not needed a second warning, and Elisée continued to have his own way. He had one inestimable merit in his master's eyes; he

allowed the king to eat and drink what he liked without much damage being caused to his general health. Much store was set, at the Tuileries, on the pleasures of the table; Louis XVIII enjoyed discussing the subject with his doctor and the Duc d'Escars, his chief butler.

In 1815, as in 1814, he enjoyed more than anything the re-establishment of the kitchen and table personnel: but he was reluctantly compelled to cut down the rest of the organisation. The captain of the mules was absolutely useless, the gentlemen of the chamber and pages too numerous. Nevertheless, he shrank from abolishing any of these posts. He enjoyed hunting out ancient warrants defining the duties and privileges of the Grand Master, and giving details concerning the blue staff adorned with *fleurs de lys* and surmounted by a closed crown which that official used to break at the kings' funerals to indicate that "*la maison était rompue.*"

One day he even thought of having himself crowned at Rheims, and the chief equerry had one of the royal carriages regilded and the royal arms painted in again on the doors, green leather handles made for the footman, also harness of red leather and green and gold silk reins. It was all very expensive and quite useless.

The *ancien régime* had an invincible attraction for him, and he would have liked to follow where his instincts led. But considerations of prudence restrained him; and as he could not, with his shapeless legs, prom-

inent stomach and moderate stature, present in public the magnificent spectacle he would have desired to, and was neither horseman nor warrior, he fell back on pleasures within easier reach; first the table and then the *salon*. Here he was thoroughly conscious of his superiority and enjoyed himself immensely.

Napoleon, who used to make the minutest inquiries into "Monsieur's" character and behaviour, said: "He is Louis XVI over again, but less frank and more intelligent." He had seen some of his letters, and pronounced them to be very well written, but abstract and metaphysical, and too academic in style. In his opinion the new Bourbon king was no statesman; his place was at the Institute, among the scholars.

This opinion, like most of the Emperor's, contained a good deal of truth; but if he had known the king personally, Napoleon would have perceived in him an acuteness which did not escape Talleyrand, another great observer of men. Talleyrand called Louis XVIII "King Tricky" *(le roi nichard);* in the diplomatist's opinion, he was chiefly concerned to dupe the person with whom he was dealing, or at least to place him in an embarrassing or self-contradictory position. This is, indeed, the light in which Bonaparte's successor has been viewed by posterity. He is remembered more by his *mots* than by anything else; hundreds of them have been collected. As many more, without doubt, have been attributed to him that he never said; but it was an astonishing performance none

the less, in a prince compelled by necessity to a stagnant existence and supporting life only on the stock of wit which was all his early training had given him. He had the tone, the sense of fun, the humour of the eighteenth century; the new influences which had swept across Europe had left him quite untouched. He surrounded himself by the same elegant, refined circle as of old; his manners were at the same time elaborate, playful and distant.

He enchanted simple folk, *parvenus* like Dupont, defeated at Baylen,[1] whom he had unluckily appointed minister, by the paternal charm of his conversation. But when the old courtier Barentin, so stout a supporter of the Bourbons that he wore a blue ribbon of oil-cloth in order not to have to take it off in his bath, declared that he had never sworn fidelity to the usurper, he unhorsed him with the words, "*Vous n'avez pas juré? Vous avez 'jurote'?* At your age one only does things by halves."

Sharper than the typical Frenchman, he seemed an anomaly in the society of the day. His fun was old-fashioned and thin, but at times he got in a shot that went home. It was an affectation of his to give people their wrong titles. He said to General Lauriston "*Bonjour, marquis*," and to the Comte de la Roche-Aymon, "*Bonjour, général.*" When the new Minister

[1] General Dupont capitulated to the Spaniards at Baylen on July 22, 1808. He was degraded and imprisoned by Napoleon and only released after the fall of the Empire.

for War, Gouvion-Saint-Cyr, was trying to obtain the dismissal of an official, the king sent him to look for a book on some pretext, and while he was doing this threw the dismissal notice into the waste-paper basket. The General said he was afraid that he had forgotten to bring it, on which the king said:

"A paper directed against one of my friends? It is in the waste-paper basket: we had better leave it there."

Clever sayings delighted him; he made a note of them and used them again himself whenever he could. In this he was his own chronicler.

At a meeting of the Council, the minister Corbière put his snuff-box and handkerchief on the table.

"You seem to be emptying your pockets," the king said.

"Is it not better," Corbière replied, "for one of your Majesty's ministers to empty them than to fill them?"

Louis XVIII was immediately in ecstasies: that Council meeting at any rate had not been a waste of time.

He once asked M. de Bozon-Périgord, who was deaf, how his wife was. The other thought the king was speaking of his cough, and replied, "*Elle m'a bien tourmenté cette nuit.*" The whole *château* heard this story.

In ladies' society he had become the old Comte de Provence once more.

"Is your hair your own?" he asked a lady in a

severe manner. The lady replied in embarrassment: "*Mon devant est à moi, mais mon derrière est en faux.*" The king was immensely tickled.

Some of the anecdotes which he related to his intimates have been collected. Their taste is not unexceptionable; they have a smack of the servants' hall —and worse. But he was not incapable of a kind of gallantry when it was required of him. At the unveiling of Henri IV's statue, under a blazing sun, the dignitaries' wives dared not open their parasols, and the king did not think of giving them permission to do so. When one of them complained, he said to her: "You must forgive my egotism, but your umbrella would have deprived me of the pleasure of seeing you."

But it would be a mistake—and a mistake too commonly made—to see Louis XVIII only in his trivial aspect. There was more in him than his official literature or his society jokes suggested; his wit was capable of higher flights. When in his presence, the discussion turned on those who first hailed the usurper and then spat in his face, he said: "There is nothing so vile as meanness when it rises from the dust; it has a double coating of filth on its hands."

The Hundred Days and the flight to Ghent had been a bitter experience to him; he no longer regarded the throne as inviolable; his mind ran on the changeableness of the people and the inconstancy of servants. He realised that the new world had not opened its doors to him; but once he had obtained, with a good

deal of trouble, a kind of tranquillity which suited his age, he was anxious to preserve it.

When someone called out, "*Vive le gros cochon!*" as his carriage passed, he stopped the gentlemen who were, with excessive promptitude, about to punish the malefactor.

"Leave him alone," he said. "Do you mean to insult me by supposing that such a remark could have been addressed to me?"

Old treasons and enmities were to him forgotten, far-off things. When a person named Reinhart was presented to him at the Tuileries, someone observed to the king in an undertone that Reinhart had been a zealous servant of all the revolutionary governments and had worked in opposition to the plans of the then Comte de Lisle. The king, however, continued to treat the guest with perfect friendliness, and, when Reinhart had gone, shrugged his shoulders and said:

"That's nothing; in 1804 he sent three agents to Warsaw to poison us all."

His policy towards the regicides, their minions and their creatures was to "drink the water of Lethe," to cultivate forgetfulness, the peace-maker.

Yet there was one past which recurred to him with strange acuteness, a tragic past which weighed heavily upon him. In January, 1815, he had ordered a search to be made in the cemetery of the Madeleine for the remains of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. First of all a head had been found, with scraps of clothing

and two garters in a very good state of preservation: and then, underneath what had been the queen's coffin, another head, "covered with chalk and placed between two shin-bones." Louis XVIII had given the royal relics honourable burial, and in no way failed to show his reverence for the memory of the martyrs.

But the Dauphin Louis XVII—the orphan of the Temple, whose death a courier had announced to him at Verona—where was his body? had he really succumbed to his ill-treatment at the hands of the abominable Simon?

In 1798, the Duchesse d'Angoulême had been told that a lad of thirteen named Hervagault had appeared in the Marne region and that he was said to be the Dauphin. Although sceptical, she informed her uncle at Mitau, and he replied that if, in defiance of all probability, the news turned out to be true, he would be sincerely delighted. Hervagault was fêted at Vitry-sur-Marne by a little court of Champagners, persuaded, perhaps not without reason, that they were paying homage to the son of Louis XVI. Fouché thought for a moment of using him against the Bourbons, but Bonaparte refused to adopt this policy. From that day Hervagault was doomed to failure; after having known the delights of a spurious royalty, he died in poverty at Bicêtre in 1812, and nothing more was heard of Louis XVII.

His name was not mentioned in the celebrations which marked the king's return: not a ceremony was

performed in his honour: although he had actually reigned, he was included among the other princes. His sufferings in the tower of the Temple seemed completely forgotten. The boy's fate seemed to be a matter of indifference to the royal family. Why was this? For a good many Royalists the escape from the Temple was an accepted truth; they awaited their Joaz who had escaped from the slaughter, and suspected the king of occupying a throne to which he had no right.

So when in December, 1815, a new Dauphin appeared in Brittany, they were filled with enthusiasm. Mathurin Bruneau, or Charles de Navarre, as he called himself, was hailed by thousands of former Chouans and soon had a court of worshippers at Rouen, whither he had been banished. The Tuileries took fright; the pretender was placed in close confinement and a police agent was given him as his advocate. Only the Duchesse d'Angoulême, who had previously been interested in Hervagault, wanted to know exactly how matters stood. At her orders Turgy drew up a list of questions which the vagabond who laid claim to the crown was to answer, whereby his veracity would be proved; but the list of questions was intercepted.

The king's government was anxious to prevent the affair from being talked about and, above all, from being cleared up. An unimpeachable witness with regard to the Temple drama was at hand in the Hospital for

Incurables—the cobbler Simon's widow. Why not confront her with Bruneau? She would recognise the little king—her Charles, as she called him. But Louis XVIII's police took care to do nothing of the kind. The Duchesse d'Angoulême certainly went to see Madame Simon, but no one knew what they said to one another. Later the widow was interrogated by Decazes himself, who ordered her to hold her tongue in the future and threatened her with the severest punishment if she disobeyed. Bruneau had been sentenced to seven years' imprisonment, so he was no longer dangerous.

The agitation continued, however. Among the clergy, and in the old Royalist families, many persisted in the belief that the Dauphin was alive. Chateaubriand asked from the tribune, "Where is the Temple orphan's [1] brother? Where shall I find him, that I may ask him the terrible question he knows too well: 'Capet, are you asleep?'" Then the government pretended to take the investigations in hand. An examination was to be made at the Sainte-Marguerite cemetery, but on the day fixed the Minister of Police ordered the proceedings to be postponed. Months and years passed. The doctor Pelletan, who had preserved the heart of the child who had died in the Temple—the child who had replaced the Dauphin on his escape—could not get the king to receive him. The affair was relegated to the files, the light deliber-

[1] The Duchesse d'Angoulême.

ately put under the bushel. But for posterity the *question Louis XVII* remained an open one.

Was Louis XVIII sure of his right to the throne? His attitude at the time of Bruneau's arrest, and his refusal to have him confronted with Simon's widow, suggest that he believed the story of the Dauphin's escape. It is hard to believe, nevertheless, that a prince so brimful of monarchic tradition would knowingly have usurped the place of the heir by right, and one may fairly believe that in his heart he was sure the Dauphin was dead. In any case one thing is certain; he did not wish the past to be dug up. France was imperceptibly becoming stabilised, and reasons of State dictated the avoidance of everything that could excite public opinion.

Plentifully endowed with the patience he had acquired during his exile, "he did not go to events, events came to him." He awaited them in his armchair, and endeavoured to suppress them if they threatened peace and order. His negative, passive qualities have been criticised by politicians, but, at the time when he put them into practice, they had their utility and even a certain grandeur. They who had worked with Napoleon were astonished at Louis XVIII's casual ways. Long reports bored him to death.

"He likes to appear to do things," his zealous ministers said, "and prefers men who make governing easy for him."

This was prudence on his part, not laziness. He

From a caricature
(Carnavalet Museum)

mistrusted innovations, and counted on the healing effect of time, like Macchiavelli. Since the Ghent days he had adopted a quite clearly defined line of policy, "*le système de modération*," as he called it—the only one, in his opinion, which could prevent France from tearing herself in pieces with her own hands. Placed outside parties, playing the rôle of mediator, he hoped to become the king, not of two hostile peoples, but of one single people whom he would worthily represent in the eyes of victorious Europe; he would do honour to his country's sorrow by the loftiness of his own bearing.

This middle path was hard to follow. However prudent he was, he could not please everyone, and he came into conflict with interests of some kind every day. The Bonapartists and Liberals accused him of duplicity. "His heart is as rotten as his legs," they said: "he is a habitual liar, not only to others but to his own conscience." They jeered at his credulity and poverty in old days, which Fauche-Borel's action against Perlet had just made public property.

But the most dangerous opposition was that of the aristocrats, emanating from the Pavillon de Marsan, where the Comte d'Artois lived, and the Faubourg St. Germain. Artois had learnt literally nothing from his exile at Ghent. Vain and stupid, persuaded that never to change was the highest personal quality, he lived, as he had formerly lived in England, surrounded by a group of extremists for whom the middle class

and the Charter, the Revolution and the Charter, were all the same thing. This community of Die-hards had its private police, which worked directly against the Ministry's police. In this *petit bureau*, which was also a miniature government, plots were denounced and, when necessary, invented; Royalists were secretly encouraged to unruly behaviour, and appointments were jobbed.

Of course the king was not spared. *Union et oubli*, union and forgetfulness, was his watchword—union with the Bonapartists and forgetfulness of the Vendée! What a shameful spectacle a monarch presented who, after having encouraged his loyal subjects to emigrate, reserved his favours for those who had been his bitterest enemies—who treated men like Barras and Grégoire with consideration, bought the regicide David's pictures, gave money to Tallien and pensioned Robespierre's sister! A crowned Jacobin, a king Voltaire who had countersigned the laws which had overthrown the monarchy, a robed comedian, good at versifying and pretty speeches, who had imported an English Charter into France—this was how Louis XVIII was depicted in the councils of the ultras. "I'd like to see him at Pondicherry!" cried one of them, Baron de Frénilly.

The king was at the Tuileries instead and opposed Frénilly (M. de Frénésie, as he called him) and his friends, who formed the majority in the Chamber, to the best of his ability. He even prepared to get rid of

them now that he felt himself supported by a part of public opinion and also by a minister on whom he had bestowed all his affection.

He had been painfully lonely since d'Avaray's death. Blacas, too cold, silent and without charm, had been no substitute for his one and only friend, whose only failing was that he did not know Latin. The king was growing old, and in playing father to his people he had come to desire the presence at his side of someone who would take the place of a son, whom he could form as he wished. He needed a Narcissus, Royer-Collard said; and the Narcissus appeared, just when he was wanted, in the shape of Decazes.

Decazes was a former official of the Empire who had been secretary to Madame Laetitia, Napoleon's mother, and had then joined the Bourbons. He was a handsome Gascon, familiar, good-natured, never insolent and, besides, extremely clever. In short, he was in every way calculated to charm Louis XVIII. His demeanour could be insinuating, his voice persuasive; moreover, he conveyed an impression of sincere conviction and devotion which was extremely attractive. In 1815, he had begged that the name of his friend Montalivet might be struck off the list of suspects so movingly that Louis XVIII had held out his arms to him, exclaiming, "You're a good fellow. Embrace me!" Decazes' fortune was made; he be-

came the king's friend, his longed-for son, the d'Avaray of the royal twilight.

It was a regular idyll. The king came to live only for and through Decazes. He worked with him in the morning, and in the Council of Ministers, not being able to talk to him privately, he passed affectionate notes to him. When his friend was absent, he wrote to him asking for occupation—for example, the outline of his next speech, so that he might put his ideas in order if needful; to take trouble for love of Decazes was a pleasure to him. In the evening, after the usual routine had been gone through and the royal family had withdrawn, he gossipped unflaggingly with his minister. Decazes, who had kept the admirable Imperial police in the service of the restored monarchy—which the ultras never forgave him—knew all there was to be known of the life of Paris, and the scandals he related delighted the king. Louis, who had become increasingly fond of slanderous gossip as he grew older, listened and laughed, breaking in occasionally with a quotation. What happy times they were! Decazes, before withdrawing, left on the table the box containing the day's mail, which he had read and annotated; his master sent it back to him next day with his own remarks and an affectionate covering letter.

King and minister daily exchanged little attentions, flatteries, rather insipid amiabilities, which brightened the old man's existence, and to which the favour-

ite lent a spice by his demonstrations of romantic affection. He declared that he would have been worth nothing without the king; everything he knew —of law, politics and literature—he owed to him; he was his work, shaped by him as the vessel by the potter. The king listened to him with delight; he brooded over him with eyes full of tenderness.

"I discovered that young man's merits," he seemed to say, "I saw of what he was capable. People don't realise by a long way what he is worth, and I mean to raise him so high that the greatest nobles will envy him."

In paying this tribute to Decazes he paid a tribute to himself, who had made the young man such a mirror of perfection. He had, indeed, realised his dearest wish; he had acquired a son to beguile his spiritual solitude and be the skilful instrument of his policy. Supported by Decazes, he recovered his old aplomb, and was emboldened to shake off the influence of the ultras.

"I don't mean to be the king of diamonds," he said.

On September 5, 1816, the too Royalist Chamber, which Louis XVIII, less because he believed it than from the desire to perpetrate a witticism, called *la Chambre introuvable*, was dissolved by a Royal decree. The decree of dissolution was couched in the rotund, flowery phraseology which came so easy to him; he appealed to lovers of peace, dwelt on the inviolability of the Constitution and the danger of mak-

ing innovations; and all who had accepted the Bourbons on condition that they respected the Constitution applauded. The ultras were horrified; the king had not hesitated to choose between his family and his favourite. "The *parvenu* with his footman's shoulders and the bearing of a smart coachman, his hawk's eye and eagle's beak" had turned his master's brain. Chateaubriand, in his pamphlet "The Constitutional Monarchy" *(La Monarchie selon la Charte)* insinuated that the decree did not express the king's own feelings, but was merely a proof of the deplorable influence exercised by the favourite; and Decazes was held up to public execration.

As the minister had appointments at his disposal, his enemies continued to do lip-service to him, but when they passed the lamp-post at his door they wished they could see him hanging from it. A great lady loudly declared that Decazes' supporters "*pensaient comme des cochons.*" Louis XVIII, of course, was one of them; the decree had made him his own master, and he congratulated himself on it. He took up the cudgels for his friend; he struck Chateaubriand, who had expressed doubts as to his personal wishes, from the list of Ministers of State and put the police on his track.[1]

The new Chamber was mainly composed of Government nominees; the Right was enormously weakened, and to all appearances peace reigned. The king ac-

[1] The king knew that Chateaubriand had serious money difficulties.

cordingly resumed the placid existence which it had been his object to secure, and devoted himself to the task of making "his beloved son" happy. He chose him a wife—the daughter of M. de Sainte-Aulaire, a deputy of the Left—supervised the marriage preparations in a fatherly manner, and sent splendid presents. His Elie's happiness—Elie was Decazes' Christian name—was his own. "*Je ne suis pas moi, je suis toi*," he wrote to him (he now habitually addressed him in the second person singular).

Time had not brought about any cooling of his passion. He loved everything in him—his wit, his intelligence, his good-nature, his good looks; he loved everything around him—his wife Egédie and his sister Zélie, Madame Princeteau, a pretty brunette with a delicious smile, with whom he imagined himself in love. Elie, Egédie, Zélie! a charming trinity from whom he could never be separated, for whom he prayed God daily. Decazes received at the Chamber letters which ended thus: "I much hope to see my friend to-morrow and to press to my bosom my son whom I love with all my heart."

The old man was half father, half lover. The loved one's absence made him quite helpless; he sought solace in walking beneath the minister's windows, gazing wistfully at the walls behind which he lived. When Decazes was ill, the king was prostrated.

"I command you as your king and I implore you as your father not to dream of coming at all to-morrow.

For my sake send for the very best doctors; I shall not breathe till I hear that they have prescribed for you. I love you so much."

But if Decazes overcame his indisposition and came to the Tuileries, he showered attentions on him. "The delicious quarter of an hour we spent together," he wrote, "has healed my wound."

The favourite lived in princely style; a gold-laced head footman and a crowd of lackeys stood at his door, a striking contrast to the simplicity of the Prime Minister Richelieu. The king wished his Elie to cut a fine figure, to reflect his own majesty.

The entourage of the Comte d'Artois remained as hostile as ever. Even the least extreme of them failed to comprehend the king's infatuation for an underbred fellow who in ordinary times would have been just a provincial dandy. He was clever, no doubt—very clever indeed—but his method of government was nothing but a series of expedients. Louis XVIII had only one fear—that he might not be following his friend's advice with sufficient thoroughness. He was quite aware of the intrigues of the *petit bureau*, and the disgraceful notes it was sending to the Powers with the object of delaying the evacuation of France and so bringing about the favourite's fall.

The latent antipathy between the two brothers became open hostility. Although they did not send for witnesses to hear their quarrels, some of their disputes have been handed down to posterity. On one occa-

sion Artois, furious at some bill the Government had brought in, cried:

"My children and I will leave the Court."

"There are fortresses for rebellious princes."

"Imprisonment for political offences is illegal under the Constitution."

The king was dumbfounded at this unexpected reply, in which the leader of the ultras appealed to the "hated Charter"; the gout went to his stomach and he nearly suffocated.

They were not always as violent as this, but there was a permanent bitterness. Louis XVIII, one day, was trying to persuade Artois to remarry.

"But, my dear brother," Artois said, "as you are preaching the virtues of marriage, why don't you get married yourself?"

To which the king, from the depths of his armchair, replied in ringing tones:

"Because I should have eldest sons, my dear brother."

These were only skirmishes; but at last the stubborn Royalists, exasperated at the Liberal régime which kept them powerless, decided to strike a great blow. They aimed at nothing less than putting Charles X on the throne without waiting till Providence had disposed of Louis XVIII. This conspiracy, called the Waterside Plot, because it was hatched on the terrace of the Tuileries which runs along the bank of the Seine, was easily discovered by Decazes' police. It

would have been imprudent to seize the leaders, so only some subordinates were arrested and at once released. The king, however, was warned. He had already deprived his brother of the command of the National Guard, and this new attempt of the defeated party bound him more closely than ever to Decazes.

Decazes, sure of "his father's" support, governed openly against the inclinations of the Court and the Pavillon de Marsan. He had climbed rapidly from one honour to another, and in 1819 was President of the Council. The provincial dandy now held the fate of France in his elegant hands. He had nominated seventy-three new peers all in one batch to secure himself a majority in the Chamber of Peers, and had passed a Liberal press law. The outcry of the ultras was tremendous. The Duc de Berry, with his usual vehemence, said out loud before a hundred people:

"The scoundrel is ruining everything—the king, France, the monarchy! In old days there was at least a chance of seeing the people do justice on favourites!"

The "Sejanus of Libourne" was indeed choosing his time well! In Germany, Sand had just murdered Kotzebue: there had been popular disturbances at Manchester: and this of all others was the moment he chose to give pledges to the Revolution!

These remarks gave Decazes food for reflection; for the Duc de Berry had become a personage of first-rate importance since his marriage to Marie Caroline, eldest daughter of the King of the Two Sicilies. The

family quarrels had been smoothed over in honour of his marriage in 1816, and for some weeks Louis XVIII had thought of nothing but etiquette and ceremonial. If ways and means had allowed it, festivities would have been held similar to those which marked the nuptials of the Duchess of Burgundy or of Louis XVI, but the degeneration of the times had had to be taken into account.[1] Nevertheless the king, splendidly dressed, with the "Regent" in his hat and the "Sancy" in his sword-hilt, and wearing half-boots, had gone to meet the bride at Fontainebleau, and brought her in triumph to Paris.

Decazes remembered all this. Certainly the king had no love for the Duc de Berry. He was violent, inclined to behave disagreeably to the military element, which he justly suspected of Bonapartist tendencies, and incapable of successfully carrying out a diplomatic mission or even of simply acting as the king's representative: in short, he did not at all fit into the "system of moderation" by which his uncle set so much store. His morals were far from good; he was pleasure-loving, hated the Tuileries balls at which people had to amuse each other "like Jews"; he was to be seen not only in his wife's apartments, but also in those of his

[1] The postal administration calculated that for a procession similar to that of the Comtesse de Provence one-third of the post-horses in France would have been required; they would have had to be sent from a considerable distance, and this item alone would have cost 400,000 francs.

mistresses, Virginie Oreille, a dancer, and his English sweetheart Amy Brown, by whom he had two daughters. The king condemned his misbehaviour, called him "the child" and, to emphasise his dissatisfaction, never asked for snuff from his box—a mark of the deepest disgrace.

But, the fact remained that as the Duc d'Angoulême had no issue, all the hopes of the legitimists hung on Berry. Decazes could not ignore the enmity of this prince of the blood. He felt, and the king agreed with him, that it would be prudent to give the helm a touch to the right, and announced that he was going to bring in an electoral law which would check the advance of Liberalism.

On the night of February 13-14, 1820, the king was asleep in his iron bed, behind his green silk curtains, when, about half past two, he was suddenly woken. It was Decazes. The minister broke to him the news that the Duc de Berry had just been stabbed with a knife at the doors of the Opéra by a fanatic named Louvel. The old man, nightcap on head, his face but dimly illuminated by the night-light which burned in the room, was anxious to get up and go at once; but Decazes calmed him, promising that all information would be brought to him, and the king lay down again.

Two hours later Decazes returned.

"Is all over?" Louis XVIII cried at sight of him.

"No, Sire, but your Majesty has been asked for. I beg you to summon up all your courage."

The king embraced him, and said, "Tell them to get me up!" This was a lengthy operation in his state of health. When he had been hoisted into his carriage, he did not utter a word the whole way.

On the Opéra staircase which led to the princes' box, the porters groaned under the weight of the royal armchair. The ascent was steep and the crowd dense; and Louis XVIII, jolted from banisters to wall, had difficulty in reaching the landing. On reaching the *salon* where his nephew was lying, his shirt open and showing the terrible wound, he took off his hat, sat down, recovered his breath, and spoke kindly to the dying man. Then, classical scholar before everything, he asked the surgeon Dupuytren, who was present, "*Superestne spes aliqua salutis?*" Dupuytren did not know Latin, but another doctor, Dubois, replied in correct Latin that the case was desperate.

"May God's will be done!" the king said. The Duc murmured a few words of apology for having disturbed the king in his sleep. "It is five o'clock, my boy," he replied. "I have had my night's rest. I am going to stay with you."

A few moments later Dupuytren asked for a mirror. Louis XVIII held out his snuff-box, and the glass of it was held before the prince's lips and nostrils, but its surface was not dulled.

"Is it all over?"

Dupuytren made an affirmative sign.

"Then help me, I have a last duty to perform to my son."

And the gouty king, leaning on the surgeon's arm, closed the eyes of him who had been the gay Duc de Berry, while all present fell on their knees.

Next day, from the tribune of the Chamber, an "ultra" deputy, Clausel de Coussergues, accused Decazes of complicity in the murder which had put France in mourning.

"The charge is as absurd as it is atrocious!" Louis XVIII cried when he heard the news. But he was too acute not to see the object of the manœuvre.

"They want to turn my grief to their own ends, and separate us, my dear son," he said to Decazes; "but they will not succeed."

But the king at the Tuileries, crippled and ill, could not follow the subterranean activities of the ultras. The gossip of the Paris markets declared that Louvel had been instigated by the king's minister; of course he must have been! Decazes was an old minion of Fouché's, a police agent of Bonaparte's, reared in the despot's anterooms; his sham Royalism was only a snare to secure the king's confidence. When Decazes went to call on the Comte d'Artois, he was received with murmurs. He was privately advised to go if he valued his life. Even his friends, and those who had received favours from him, demanded his retirement. On February 16 he sent his resignation to the king,

who collapsed. "Your letter has killed me!" he wrote to his beloved Elie.

The death of the Duc de Berry was a providential stroke of luck for the ultras; he was more useful to them dead than living. They must act, and act quickly. But the king obstinately refused to accept his minister's resignation. "They shall not separate us!" he kept repeating. But they were not to be put off so easily. A regular siege of the old man's armchair began. Meals were a lugubrious performance. Artois appeared with his face swollen and very pale; the Duchesse d'Angoulême wept silently, and her husband sat with lowered head, speechless with fear. Sometimes, however, direct attacks were delivered. Artois said that as a father he could not receive Decazes, and the Duchesse hinted that if he did not go there would perhaps be yet another victim.

One day after dinner Decazes found the king purple in the face, with bloodshot eyes. The old man pointed, stammering, to a spot close to his armchair.

"My brother and my niece," he exclaimed, "were kneeling there just now, declaring that they would not get up till I had promised to sacrifice you! I replied so sharply and angrily that I must have been heard at the Carrousel!"

But Decazes felt that public opinion was being inflamed against him; Chateaubriand had accused him of having dyed his dictator's purple in the blood of the Duc de Berry; and he pressed his father to let him go.

"The wolves are simply asking the shepherd to sacrifice his dogs," the poor man said.

"Only one of his dogs, Sire, he will keep the other six," the victim replied, alluding to his ministerial colleagues.

"You know very well that when you have gone the shepherd will no longer have a dog to guard him."

He had still a moment's hope that he might not lose his dear son. The Duc de Richelieu refused to take the post of President of the Council, but the Comte d'Artois flung himself at his feet and implored him to save the royal family, and to protect what remained of it from the assassin's knife. Richelieu accepted, and Decazes' resignation became a fact. Then the king's grief expanded itself in literary composition.

"Come and see the thankless prince who could not defend you. Come and mingle your tears with those of your unhappy father. . . . Can you still believe I love you?"

All had betrayed him, even Angoulême, of whom he had had hopes. He compared himself to Cæsar and to King Lear.

"I have to bear what cannot be borne. We shall see each other again, shall we not, my adored son?"

He was without doubt more affected than he had been by his nephew's death.

The few hours which preceded Decazes' departure were nothing but a prolonged agony. Louis XVIII drew up with his own hand the warrant making his

friend a duke: he appointed him Ambassador in London, with a salary of 300,000 francs, and, anxious not to deprive himself of his enlightened advice, allowed him to keep the title of Minister of State. He loaded him with flowers and presents; a large part of these were sent by mistake to the Duc de Castries, who was completely mystified when all the beautiful things were unpacked. The king wrote one tearful, heart-rending note after another.

"My morale is broken. May you suffer less than your father! My heart is broken, my son, my dear son. I love you, I shall love you to my last breath."

On the day of his departure he fixed Elie as the password, and Chartres, the town where his friend was to spend the night, as the rallying word. "Good-bye, my Elie, my Egédie, my Zélie!" he groaned, and he had the new Ambassador's portrait hung in his study in the place of that of Francis I.

Just as Decazes was getting into the carriage, a man-servant handed him a note folded in four.

"To my cousin the Duc Decazes. Goodbye, my dear son, I bless you from the bottom of a broken heart. I embrace you a thousand times."

The carriage started, avoiding the Versailles road, for the police had been warned that *gardes du corps* were waiting for the Duc there to give him a bad send-off.

In four days, thanks to a frantic's crime, the ultras had struck down the king's favourite.

CHAPTER IX

SENTIMENT AND POLICY

TWO large mahogany bookcases, a clock in its case, an armchair, a little deal table covered with a very shabby green cloth and heaped with royal pamphlets, among which stood a tiny bell with a walnut-wood handle, and a portrait of Duc Elie Decazes on the wall: the king's study. Half-past ten strikes—the time at which breakfast comes to an end. The door opens. Louis XVIII walks to the armchair as best he can, supporting the weight of his body on his stick, and slowly and deliberately lets himself down into it all in one piece, without bending his knees, while the gentlemen on each side of him pick up his coat-tails. He puts his stick into the iron ring affixed to the right foot of the table, nods, and is left alone. . . .

When Louis XVIII wrote, he seldom forgot that he was a king. He was by nature incapable of writing simply; his style was urbane, unctuous and fluid, generally unimpeachable from the grammatical point of view. Everything was passed through the sieve of his

royal dignity before being put down on paper. If he had to express violent feeling, he had recourse to Latin or wrote, "Good-bye! my blood boils." In his worst troubles he maintained this quiet style, controlled his impulses and suppressed his sensibility. Hence the lack of fire, the impression of something well chewed beforehand, that one feels over and over again when reading the innumerable letters that he has left. And yet they have amid all the repetition and the quasi-*bourgeois* artificiality, a kind of grandeur, derived not only from the control he obstinately exercised over himself, but from the immense vanity which bursts out here and there and breaks through the surface of good manners—the vanity of the most ancient monarch in Europe. . . .

But today he was suffering too much, and having no longer anyone to whom he could confide his troubles, he wrote for himself alone. The usher watched at the door; the silence was profound. . . . He thought of the many delightful hours in which his son and he had shared everything: serious and lighter talk, joy and sorrow—three years of pure, continuous, cloudless happiness. Could the memory of it all disappear like a flash? His days, no doubt, were numbered; he had hoped to pass them quietly, to taste the pleasure of reigning and of being loved, after having known poverty, insult, and the pain of having to humiliate himself before monarchs of inferior quality and devoid of generosity. He had erected for himself a bulwark of

prudence and gentleness, surrounded himself with friendship and charm: this end he had planned for his life was a marvel of arrangement. And at one blow he fell back into a position of dependence on a hostile, sly brother and a niece "as dry as a hundred nails," whom he almost feared; he saw before him a future of wretched intrigues, unstable conditions, popular and military insurrections: and he found himself alone, powerless and deceived, sitting at the little table he had used at Hartwell, in a cold study stacked with papers.

To give vent to his grief, he drew up a memorandom of the whole affair, in which he retraced all that he had suffered, day by day, from the tragic night at the Opéra to the parting from his dear Elie. Where he describes "the fearful scene" with his brother, one can almost feel the narrator's hand trembling: no one could have seen him then without being sorry for him. Who would be sorry for him now? This passage in Louis XVIII's memorandum was almost a cry of distress.[1] The memory of Decazes was so keen that every incident, every conversation recalled him. If anyone glanced at the portrait of the vanished favourite, he immediately seized the opportunity of mentioning him.

"Ah! what a friend he was to me! I have had to sacrifice him, but I am as attached to him as ever."

[1] "When misfortune has a grudge against a man, it attacks him on all sides. . . . Only a month ago, I saw my family recreated before my eyes. . . . My minister was my friend."

When a lady complained that she had been deprived of the custody of her children, he replied:

"And I too have had my son taken from me. They tore him from me, Madame!"

The letters which he wrote to his dear Elie, when the latter had withdrawn to his estates at Libourne, are a perpetual lament interlarded with quotations, with the commonplaces of the unfortunate. Everything brings the lost friend before his eyes, everything renews his grief, his heart contracts when he passes under Elie's windows. He "gazes at the beloved image round which the light casts a halo."

Decazes stopped in Paris on his way to his post in London; he was received at the Tuileries every day, and the exchange of notes began again, to such an extent that Richelieu was annoyed. Louis XVIII, passionately as he loved Decazes, was too sensible not to understand that the presence of the old minister made things difficult for the new one. "Alas!" he wrote. "Jonathan was obliged to hide from Saul in order to love David." He recommended his dear son, who, "if things had been in France as they were before the Revolution, would have been his minister till the day of his death," to the Regent of England; and the ambassador departed, enriched with this viaticum.

As the weeks passed the king's grief grew less keen. One day, irritated at the persistent attacks of the ultras, Decazes asked leave to come to France and defend himself; but the king gently dissuaded him. But

Madame Decazes, his dear Egédie, fell ill, and her husband brought her back to Paris. He was cordially received at the Tuileries, but an undercurrent of awkwardness was perceptible; the king would like his dear son to stay a week, but not longer, for reasons of policy. The ambassador hardly recognized the king who expressed his will thus definitely. He had been changed by other influences. Decazes was treated like an ordinary visitor—was received at fixed times!

Like all the fallen favourites with whom history abounds, he made a clumsy attempt to assert himself and refused to return to England, giving as an excuse his anxiety for his wife's health. The king closed his doors to him, and after some time even ceased sending to inquire after dear Egédie, while his Elie henceforward got nothing but amiable excuses.

"Do not break your fast," he wrote; "keep it till the day before you leave. . . . I will not let you go without my blessing."

Soon afterwards Decazes resigned his ambassadorship and left Paris, having first obtained—with great difficulty—an audience of the king.

What was the cause of this slow cooling off? The psychologists of the day have answered the question for us. Some said, "The king loves only with his eyes, not with his heart; there is not room for two passions in that shrivelled heart;" while another more impolite verdict was, "The king had lost his Narcissus with the lackey's face and shoulders; and although

Nature had given him no passions, he had to have his little tendernesses *in partibus*."

In simpler language, Louis XVIII could not be without a confidant: in this respect he was the king of classical tragedy. The sacrifice once made and Decazes at a distance, no longer playing any rôle in politics, there was a gap in his life to be filled. A minister could have taken the vacant place; but Richelieu was too proud to seek it, his colleagues had not the requisite qualities, and the Sejanus of Libourne was succeeded by a woman.

The sexual life of Louis XVIII aroused much curiosity among his contemporaries, and their evidence is confusing. Arnault, the Academician, who knew him well when he was a young man and, moreover, had anything but a high opinion of him, categorically declares that he was "as chaste as Origen." A mistress was only a luxury for him, something on a par with "the horses which are kept for his use at great expense, and which he never rides." One chronicler states that in affairs of the heart he was above all a rhetorician, certainly refined and eloquent, but too inclined to lay claim to qualities which he did not possess—for nature had been niggardly to him.

The women's evidence, on the other hand, is that he pushed his attentions to the point of gallantry, loaded them with madrigals; there was, they say, something at once eager and protective in his manner which had the effect of a declaration of love. Moreover, Louis

XVIII several times affirmed that he did not believe in platonic love.

The fact is that only two women are known to have been his mistresses—Madame de Balbi and that "Milady Dacre" who was with him at Verona, and who, the agents of the Directory declared, passed for his daughter. His discretion and prudence were certainly very great; still, one is inclined to doubt whether this was so. On the other hand, there is no question that he liked to play the grandfather. At Mitau, he took little Dorothy of Courland on his knee, kissed her, called her "his little Italian girl" because of her black eyes, questioned her about her lessons—in short, paid her countless attentions.

In 1819, he became enamoured of a woman artist who had come to Saint-Cloud to paint his portrait, and fell foul of the Duke d'Escars for having forgotten to send ices to his *protégée*. This affair annoyed Decazes for the moment. And as he grew older the tendency grew more marked. On one occasion, a lady came out from a private audience he had given her in a great state of indignation, relating how the king had tried to make her sit on his knee like little Dorothy, and that as she objected to such liberties being taken with her, she had slipped out.

These are the few indications which history has preserved for us on this delicate subject; they are sufficient to prove that the king's "fatherliness" was not purely academic: he was fond of "cuddling."

On one of his reception days, a young woman who was to be presented to him accidentally knocked over a stand on which there were some papers. She apologised in a state of confusion, picked up the scattered sheets and tried to sort them, reading their contents in an agitated voice, until she realised how clumsily she was behaving and became clumsier still. Louis XVIII looked at her; she was a pretty brunette, with charming hands and feet which could easily have worn Cinderella's slippers. He smiled, and she handed him the sheets which she had at last put in order.

"Go on reading, Madame," he said, "the charm of hearing your voice is added to the charm of your appearance."

She nearly lost her composure, but recovered, and read, in a more collected voice, a report which she obviously did not understand at all. A charming creature like her confronted with a stodgy administrative document! The king was delighted: he enjoyed the spectacle for some minutes, and then, judging that the trial had been severe enough, he said:

"Thank you, Madame. I should like to have someone as intelligent and charming as you to read to me often. Come and see me again."

Such was the first audience at which Madame du Cayla made herself famous.

Zoe Talon, daughter of a Châtelet lawyer who had long ago been concerned in the Favras affair, had married the Comte du Cayla and got on very badly with

him. She was said to have had several adventures, the most notable of which was with General Savary, the Duc de Rovigo, "*l'expéditeur du duc d'Enghien*,"[1] as he was called. It was said that one night, after a ball, she had been found sitting on his knee, while Rovigo tenderly asked her "*Es-tu contente, chère Zoé?*" Someone told the Duchesse de Rovigo, who stealthily approached the lovers and poured a jug of water over them. This may have been libellous gossip; but in any case Madame du Cayla wished to be separated from her husband, and was presented to the king through the intervention of her friend Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld. The king ordered Decazes, then at the height of favour, to arrange the matter, and Decazes did everything possible to expedite it. Madame du Cayla, free from all shackles, came to see Louis XVIII again as he had begged her to.

She came often. Witty and lively, with a caressing tone in her voice when she chose to put it there, she had some resemblance to Madame de Balbi, but her behaviour was more discreet; she even affected a kind of strictness, despised fashion, fasted ostentatiously, and was considered in smart society to be exaggeratedly religious—although, in 1820, she was only thirty-five. The king grew accustomed to her presence: when De-

[1] The Duc d'Enghien (b. 1772), suspected of complicity in Royalist plots against the Government and the life of the First Consul, was kidnapped by Bonaparte's orders at Ettenheim, in the territory of Baden, and shot at Vincennes on March 21, 1804.

cazes had been removed, she became indispensable to him. He saw her regularly three times a week from three to five, and on those days, particularly on Wednesday, he made Zoe or Victoire (another of his friend's Christian names) the password—which always amused the Court when General Talon, the favourite's brother, was on duty.

On other days he wrote to her, more often twice than once. He kept the correspondence secret, and if anyone entered his study he hid the letter under his blotting pad, like a schoolboy caught doing something wrong. He heaped presents on her—a set of diamonds, a mass of trinkets, a beautifully bound Gospel with banknotes in place of end-papers.

"If you ever fall into adversity," he said, "you will find effective consolation in this holy book."

When she played chess with him and won, she used to receive 6,000 francs, and if she lost, "a few hundred francs as consolation prize."

The idlers of whom the Tuileries was full were vastly intrigued by this love affair. It was an understood thing that the king must always have a dominating affection for someone: but why for Madame du Cayla rather than any other woman? She had cast a spell over the king, and slander pursued its course unchecked. It was said that the king was fond of taking his snuff from his friend's bosom or bare shoulder, and of rolling banknotes into a ball, tossing them as adroitly as possible into her *décolletage*, and then re-

trieving them to recommence the "amorous bombardment."

Whether these stories were true or not, they pleased the gallery of jealous women and ministers out of favour; and Opposition writers utilised them to ridicule their debilitated sovereign.

Ne livre plus les roses de ta bouche
Aux baisers morts d'un fantôme impuissant!

sang Béranger to the address of Madame du Cayla. At the Court itself she was exposed to the ill-will of the Duchesse de Berry, who, though afraid of her old uncle, august despite his weaknesses, sometimes indulged in repartees of quite Italian acidity. When Louis XVIII called his favourite his third daughter, she replied point-blank, "Your third daughter is ugly"—which may seem to have been undue severity on the Duchesse's part.

Madame du Cayla had, indeed, become the king's Egeria. He declared that his inspiration came from her, and laid before her his doubts, his cares, the problems which arose from politics or from Court intrigues; he honestly trusted to her good judgment. He enjoyed his half-romantic, half-conventional intercourse with her; there was a certain relish in forming his decisions on a charming lady's advice, in being persuaded by a pleasant voice. Handsome fellow as he was, dear Elie had offered none of these attractions. With a woman to advise him, the king renewed his

youth, found fresh charms in the task of governing, a new adornment to his royal power.

Traces of Louis XIV now appeared in Louis XVIII.

"A king," he said, "whose life is a ceaseless round of painful duties and wearying grandeurs, if he meets a woman whose like History has never shown and probably never will show, clings to her both from inclination and out of gratitude; she becomes his life, his existence, and by her side he is the happiest of men."

Thanks to a journey which Madame du Cayla made in the South of France, we are perhaps better able to gauge for ourselves the quality of the king's passion than were the inquisitive courtiers of the Tuileries. One is struck, in reading the letters which he wrote to her at that time, by the mixture of a lover's tenderness, fatherly anxiety and senile egoism displayed in them.

When she was far away, he was but "a slave loaded with chains," a traveller lost in the desert; everything was antipathetic to him, he found pleasure in nothing. When a letter came, it was to him "what bounteous rain is to the thirsty soil after a long drought"; but his heart was always desirous and was never sated. His daily effusions almost always began and ended in the same way; it must be owned that he had little inventive capacity and had no idea of how to amuse his favourite.

"My first thought on awaking, Madame, is to do

you homage. Accept the tribute of a tender feeling which differs from eternity only because it has had a beginning. My body is at the Tuileries, but all my thoughts are with you."

Her absence excited his tender feelings. He was not afraid of repeating himself; he kissed over and over again, from a distance, her "beautiful hands," her "little white hand," and sometimes her "charming children" (for Madame du Cayla had children), and to curb his impatience drove in his carriage under her windows, just as he had driven under those of Decazes.

The idea that some accident might happen to her terrified him. If a letter failed to arrive, his imagination began to work; the traveller must be vexed, or indisposed. She had already had one unpleasant experience at Longjumeau, and the roads in the neighbourhood of Carcassonne were said to be unsafe; for Heaven's sake let her be careful! His exhortations to prudence alternated with descriptions of scenery; in the days when he was Comte de Provence he had seen the parts of the country through which she was travelling, and now he saw them again with her eyes:

"The Rhone, as peaceful at Tarascon as it is furious at Pont-Saint-Esprit, the antiquities of Saint-Rémy, the plain of Aix where the eyes find rest from the aridity of the landscape, Savoy with its memoirs of Mme. de Warens and Jean Jacques, its lakes abounding in delicious fish, trout, grayling and *ferrat* . . ."

He hoped she would not stay long among the mountains; *he* did not like them, to be shut up amongst them took his breath away, for he had neither legs nor wind for them. He preferred Picardy to the Alps and the Pyrenees; the plains and smiling valleys spoke to him of "the kingly God, the Father who stretches out his arms to the prodigal son." She must not stay at Geneva either; it made him shudder to imagine her in the hands of Republican magistrates.

Above all, she must come back soon; he had counted the days since her departure; she had condemned him to a fresh term of exile: his receptions had become a tedious drudgery which wearied his "old carcase."

"This evening," he wrote, "I am receiving the ladies; possibly there may be one too many, but most certainly there will be one too few."

At last she was on her way back to Paris; and each stage in her approach was for him "*une petite suite d'idées agréables.*"

These letters might date from the eighteenth century; they belong to another age. They are full of trivial Court anecdotes, and of quotations; Horace, Boileau and Tasso are drawn upon, and the king is distressed because his friend understands neither Latin nor Italian.

But what is most peculiar about them are the medical details which the amorous dotard did not spare "the lady of his thoughts." It did not occur to him

for a moment that they might not interest her, nor that it was unbecoming to write to a young woman about the troubles of an old man in bad health: after all, they were a king's troubles, and she was so attached to him, she had already shown herself such a good nurse! so a paragraph of each letter was devoted to a medical bulletin. The patient explained his illness, described its phases, crises or abatements, not in a revolting manner, certainly, but very thoroughly. For example:

"My lips are still burning with the fever I have just had. I have dined moderately, but I must not cry hurrah too soon, I must wait and see if my feet will decide to let me sleep . . . My thumb has given me a few twinges . . . My gout thought fit to attack me violently enough to get the better of my sleepiness: but at last the struggle ceased and the good cause triumphed . . . I took some medicine this evening, but threw it up again."

On some mornings he was in high spirits.

"I did not wake up for an instant and feel perfectly well. I am more *spirited*" (he used the English word) "than yesterday; I have eaten a wing of chicken, and enjoyed it."

Then came a relapse.

"This attack has been the most severe I have had for a long time: all the humours have been on the move, and my whole nervous system irritated."

But he wrote to her, and with each line he wrote his

strength returned; then he had a meal "which had the effect he was entitled to expect of it," and offered his friend a convalescent's homage.

These daily letters hardly ever touched on politics. It is hard to suppose that the king, who was so ready to write about his symptoms, would have refrained from writing to his favourite on a subject because it was far removed from gallantry. The reason was quite a different one. If he seemed to be uninterested in political affairs, it was because they had slipped out of his hands and Madame du Cayla and her partisans had obtained control of them. The ultras, in fact, by a slow and methodical envelopment, had succeeded in disestablishing the king.

After Decazes' fall, Louis XVIII had openly and unqualifiedly supported his successor Richelieu. Having put his trust successively in the members of the Constituent Assembly, the coalition, the foreign Powers, the Vendée, and the successful generals, he now clung to the Charter, which he regarded as a bill of exchange signed "the House of Bourbon"; if ever this bill of exchange were dishonoured, the house of Bourbon would be bankrupt. But his faith in the admirable qualities of his race, and in himself, was so great that he had no serious fears for the future; and the birth of the Duc de Bordeaux removed them altogether.

On the night of September 29, 1820, the widow of the Duc de Berry brought a son into the world in the

presence of a marshal of France and sundry Court dignitaries and National Guards. The king was hastily informed; he rose that night to see his great-nephew more readily than he had got up in February to go to the Opéra. He entered his niece's room with a heavy tread amid a ceremonial silence.

"God be praised," he said, "you have a son."

Then he sat down and handed the Duchesse a magnificent spray of diamonds and a purse full of bank-notes.

"This is for you," he said, "and this"—indicating the child—"is for me."

He was brought a clove of garlic and a bottle of Jurançon wine. He rubbed the new-born child's lips with his numbed hands and gave him a little wine. His gestures had a traditional dignity, for when he did this he was King of Navarre. Later in the day he appeared on the balcony of the Tuileries, showed the heir of the Bourbons to the people, and cried:

"We are all just one family and you are all my children. This child will be your father some day!"

It was a sunny day: the bells rang and the crowd cheered enthusiastically. Louis XVIII had never known such popularity; after so many years of uncertainty he felt that he and his people understood one another. He could not now fear the collapse of the monarchy and the end of his line. This child, "born of a martyr's blood," was a gift of Providence.

The ultras immediately set to work to make capital

out of the event. They suspected Richelieu of Liberalism. "He's no better than Robespierre!" one of them said. The Charter remained inviolate, and the Charter stood in the way of the Restoration as the Comte d'Artois and his circle saw it. Artois, after having declared to Decazes' successor, "On the word of a gentleman, your policy shall be mine: I will be the first to fight for you!", proceeded to betray him openly; he endeavoured to get rid of a statesman who was too honest and scrupulous for his purposes; but the king's loyalty to his minister was unshakeable.

The ultras then had recourse to intrigues. The Duchesse de Berry, who had become the hope of the party, one day brought her uncle a letter which she had just found on her table, containing horrible threats against the royal family. The police were informed but found nothing, and the ultras sneered.

"What can one expect," they asked, "of police who are still M. Decazes' nominees?"

It was at last discovered that the letter had been written by a maid of the Duchesse's, and at her orders. The Government tried to make light of the matter, but the king had to ask in the Council of Ministers that "his niece's reputation should be protected, although she hardly deserved it."

This imaginary plot having produced no effect, they tried to circumvent the king by more direct methods, and Madame du Cayla appeared on the scene. She was devoted to the Comte d'Artois and had been im-

plicated in the events which led to Decazes' fall. As she rose in favour from day to day, the ultras surrounded her and instilled their doctrines into her; and she became their spokeswoman with Louis XVIII.

The king was at that time disturbed at the new elections which had been held; their result was too favourable to the Royalists.

"We are," he said, "in the position of the unfortunate horseman who was not active enough to mount his horse" (a situation which the king understood perfectly). "He prayed to St. George with such fervour that the saint gave him more than he needed, and he fell off on the other side."

In these circumstances the task of inducing her patron to turn more to the Right was a delicate one for the favourite. She discharged it with a charming aplomb; during the private audiences he used to give her she put in a word here and there, assuring him that Richelieu's enemies were the most loyal servants of the throne, and that a genuinely Royalist minister would bring peace to France and at the same time to him who presided over her destinies. She thought only of the happiness of her sovereign, who, after all his exertions and hardships, was entitled to a quiet life.

Louis XVIII let himself be lulled by her voice. He saw before him a prospect of long peaceful days, brightened by the presence of a woman he loved; his days of tedium were over; he could, without lowering himself, descend from the heights and enjoy the privi-

lege of pleasant, familiar intercourse. He had no genuine attachment to Richelieu; Madame du Cayla quickly perceived this, and the undermining work continued, slowly and surely. At last the king was persuaded—so firmly persuaded that he asked his minister to offer his resignation three times in one evening; he had promised Madame du Cayla that Richelieu's resignation should be placed in her hands before she went to bed. She received it at midnight.

That evening, without knowing it, Louis XVIII signed his own abdication. The personnel was suddenly changed. It did homage to its master, as to an idol which one is accustomed to worship but for which one cares little: and the idol, in his declining days, inhaled the smell of the incense with enjoyment. Every morning La Rochefoucauld carried Madame du Cayla's password to M. de Villèle, who had carried out the subterranean work of destruction [1] and had been rewarded by the ministry. Madame du Cayla played the leading part in the game, and made the king wish what she wished. Thus the strange spectacle was seen of a constitutional monarch, unconsciously and by quiet paths, returning to a kind of absolutism; the experience he bought dearly during his exile was forgotten, and the instinct of domination got the upper hand once more.

To test the strength of her position, Madame du Cayla undertook to bring about a reconciliation be-

[1] He was called "the mole."

tween the king and his brother. It was an ungrateful task, for these two men had always followed divergent lines; Blacas, who knew all that was to be known about their relations, having followed their course in critical moments, in England and during the Hundred Days, had said, "No genuine reconciliation between them is possible."

Nevertheless, the favourite flattered herself that she could perform this miracle. Everything was prepared like a treaty between belligerents, with clauses and conditions. Monsieur was to enter the king's study; not a word was to be said about the past; the king was to ask for a pinch of snuff, and Monsieur was to open his snuff-box and offer it to him; they were to talk about the weather; then Monsieur was to leave the room, having first gone up to the king, who would hold out his hand, which Monsieur would press respectfully; and afterwards they would live as they had done of old and would meet as good friends.

The treaty thus drawn up was nearly broken by two intimates of the Comte d'Artois, MM. de Vitrolles and de Bruges, who thought the conditions were too lenient to Louis XVIII, and that pledges ought to be asked for. Madame du Cayla negotiated, and, to settle the matter, said to the king, "Give these people sinecures with ministers' salaries." Her advice was good; they bit on the golden hook and gave no further trouble.

The Pavillon de Marsan and the brotherhood hav-

ing triumphed, figures long unseen reappeared at the Tuileries. The king disliked Chateaubriand; he was not jealous of his literary attainments, but his talk wearied him, and above all, he could not easily forgive him for having written that Decazes had slipped in a pool of blood. Nevertheless he recalled him; it was suggested to him that it was better to win Chateaubriand over than to have him in opposition. "He is so far-seeing in politics when he does not put himself in the way!" someone said, and Villèle added, "We don't choose the super-brawlers to quarrel with."

The interview was not cordial. Chateaubriand, greatly embarrassed, stammered that if his conduct had displeased the king, he regretted it. Louis XVIII, "though he longed to say what he thought," replied tranquilly that a new era was beginning, and that he thought it advisable to send M. de Chateaubriand on a mission to Berlin. Then, after a few trivial remarks had been exchanged, the author of "The Constitutional Monarchy" bowed low before the man he had so violently attacked.

The Comte d'Artois was in the seventh heaven; he tasted the sweets of power in anticipation. Madame du Cayla understood his slightest hint and obeyed his instructions with incomparable tact. In return he constituted himself the champion of her honour and reputation.

"Despise," he said to her, "the talk of people who would be bad if they were not too frivolous and fu-

tile; continue without fear the admirable use you have made of my worthy brother's kindness and confidence."

The "admirable use" to which the Comte referred meant a return to the régime of 1815 and the suppression of all Liberal or Bonapartist activities.

There was at the time a regular epidemic of military insurrections in Europe, and France was not immune. While the king was still pursuing a policy of moderation and pacification, General Gouvion-Saint-Cyr had restored to the Army a number of officers who had not declared for the Bourbons. When the ultra-Royalists regained the helm, these men, who had finally accepted the white flag from motives of prudence or weariness, could no longer endure the annoyances to which they were subjected; that the priestly party, the Vendean party should dictate its wishes was in their eyes an intolerable usurpation. Secret societies increased in number; the public prosecutors vehemently denounced the intrigues of the *Carbonari*, the enemies of the established order, and conspiracies were repressed with the utmost severity. During the year 1822 alone there were twelve executions for political offences.

The case of the La Rochelle sergeants stirred public opinion; the youth of the prisoners inspired compassion. But Louis XVIII was unbending; the former moderate no longer restrained the thirst for vengeance which characterised the men who in 1815 had suffered the humiliation of the flight to Ghent. After General

MADAME DU CAYLA

From the original of M. le Prince de Beauvau

Berton's plot, he received from the General's children a moving appeal, in which, however, their father's crime was treated as a venial offence. This settled the matter for him at once; "all his compassion evaporated" and Berton was executed.

Louis XVIII, the puppet of a clique, enmeshed by a clever woman, was now only the shadow of a king; but he did not seem to be aware of his fall. The outward form of power, the regularly performed ceremonies, the daily repetition of the duties of a sovereign became everything in life to him; in this respect he filled the throne to perfection.

But even as he was, he was not entirely negligible. One wonders what the courtiers and ladies thought, when he appeared on Sundays after mass, pushed in his bath-chair by his valet Baptiste. A large hat with a white plume, placed on his knees, concealed to some extent the shapelessness of his legs; but his enormous body, his aspect of a monstrous pantaloon, must, one would think, have deprived him of all majesty. But if we interrogate contemporary writers on this point, they almost all agree that the king in his old age was dignified and charming. The afflictions of his feet and body only emphasised the evergreen, vigorous youthfulness of his face—the lofty sloping forehead, the bright blue eyes, luminous, sparkling and moist, the fresh colouring with the healthy tinge of youth. And when he spoke, he was still more majestic.

We can picture the royal family assembled, awaiting the moment to pay court to the sovereign.

"My brother!" Louis XVIII said.

Monsieur advanced, and the king whispered a sentence or two in his ear.

"My niece!"

The Duchesse d'Angoulême approached.

"My nephew!"

The king addressed a few words to Angoulême in his turn.

Last, "My niece de Berry!"

The ministers were called by their names; the king spoke to them rather louder than to the princes, so that those who surrounded his armchair could hear; but the favourite of the moment had the privilege of being summoned twice, and no one heard what was said to him. Then came the turn of the marshals and the Ministers of State, who replied from their places. The king had established formulas for them. "How is your stomach?" he used to say regularly to M. Dubouchage. He did not question or look at people who were out of favour, and the highest mark of disgrace was to be stared at fixedly in silence.

Thus, by the *nuances* of his treatment of them, the crippled king guided his flock, and no one dreamed for a moment of seeing anything ridiculous in him. He imposed on them as he always had done—on Condé's soldiers at Dillingen, on the Tsar Alexander at Compiègne. When he received the ladies on

Wednesdays, they passed before him one by one, timidly, as though they had been under the eyes of a formidable monarch.

In privacy he was more easy-going; he used to joke about his own infirmities. "As M. Josse is a goldsmith, I shall always have a liking for people who weigh two or three quintals." He adopted a genial fatherly manner, and used to dismiss visitors by saying to them, "If I were at your house, I should go away." But if at any moment he had to emphasise his kingship, his voice swelled and took on an imperious note. When, after Condé's death, he was asked where the body should be laid, he replied:

"In the church of Saint-Denis, as Charles V did for Duguesclin and Louis XIV for Turenne."

There was nevertheless one side of his character which as he grew older developed in a wrong direction. At the beginning of the Restoration period Madame de Staël said, "We shall have a king who is very fond of literature." Certainly Louis XVIII pensioned Hugo, and it has even been said that he gave a fresh soul to the struggling profession of letters. But it was not literature that he encouraged, but academic gatherings. He liked prettiness and pomposity in literature, not what was really fine; he set store by a sort of disconnected erudition of which he made himself a walking dictionary, encumbering his memory with a prodigious accumulation of quotations and anecdotes. Horace was the official poet, and was in-

defatigably translated, for this was a sure means of securing favour, or, to put it more crudely, a subsidy.

Here the king's literary appreciation stopped short. Always a man of narrow reading, he became by degrees a mere pedant. He enjoyed outquoting someone in Latin, reciting an ode straight off or rounding off a verse happily. No doubt he knew Racine by heart, but he also knew the light comedy *Rose et Colas*, Marmontel's stories and Baculard Arnaud's rubbish. He himself produced little pieces quite royal in their badness, the success of which he watched most sensitively; woe to the papers which found bad French in his works, so polished and elaborate!

All this was an indication of a weakening intelligence. He revived the tastes of his youth, but discoloured and faded by age; and, under the watchful eyes of his former enemies, made his way painfully back to the source whence he had sprung.

CHAPTER X

THE ARMCHAIR KING

PERE ELISEE, the gay monk of the Tuileries, died. The Court doctors, headed by Portal, who heartily despised the charlatan-surgeon, immediately abandoned his methods and, without even inquiring into his manner of putting on dressings, straightway replaced empiricism by science. At once the king's condition grew worse. Till then he had been able to totter a few steps; when he received ambassadors he made a point of remaining standing, in order, he used to say, not to "*montren aux nations Mithridate détruit.*"

Now he had to abandon this predilection: erysipelas, gout, varicose veins, ulcers on his knees and under his feet nailed him to the big green leather armchair on three wheels which Baptiste steered with such dexterity. Henceforth he and his chair were all one: his bulk exactly fitted it. He became, in his own words, an armchair king.

He reacted against his compulsory immobility by

constantly going out, not pushed in his bathchair, but driving in a carriage. An inclined plane fitted with grooves had been constructed from top to bottom of the Tuileries staircase; and this Louis XVIII, preceded by his first chamberlain and pushed by Baptiste, descended to the door of the Pavillon de Flore, where his carriage was waiting for him—a gilded carriage with sprays of lilies on the doors. The armchair was hoisted in and fitted on to the back seat, which was piled with white satin cushions, and the carriage started.

The coachman had orders to drive at full speed in all weathers; even if the roads were thick in dust or slippery with frost, the carriage never slackened pace. If one of the escort, a musketeer or a *garde du corps*, fell, he was picked up, but no fuss was made about it. If he was an officer, the king would send to inquire after him in the evening; if his horse was lamed he would be given another. On they went, faster and ever faster!

The landscape flew by as in a kaleidoscope, the carriage swayed and bumped on the *pavé* of the king's roads. If it was smashed, what matter? a second carriage was following, and would replace it. On, on! The route prescribed had to be covered in a fixed time; it was generally forty or fifty miles—by Choisy, the forest of Sénart, Grosboy and back by Vincennes. Louis XVIII enjoyed driving at a giddy speed; he felt, too, that the sight of the royal carriage at full gallop

must make a great impression on the people. He never said a word during the whole drive; and with good reason, for the noise was diabolical and it was impossible to hear what anyone said. At last the steaming, foundered horses drew up before the Pavillon de Flore, and the armchair and its occupant were carried upstairs with the same ceremonial as before. This happened on five days in the week. The carriage only moderated its speed if the king had taken with him some peer of France in order to influence his vote, or prevent him from reaching the Luxembourg in time for the count.

By six o'clock in the evening the king was in his study, with some of the powder gone from his hair, but with a healthy colour and feeling as if he had taken some kind of exercise. His brain was as clear as ever, and he still had the gift of expressing himself happily. When the news of Napoleon's death came, he said to General Rapp, who was weeping silently: "Your grief does honour to your heart, and I esteem you the more for it."

His passion for Madame du Cayla had not grown lukewarm. Following the example of Francis I and Louis XIV, he gave her a beautiful house at Saint-Ouen. "Saint-Denis is not far from Saint-Ouen," he said; "you will pray for me there." The favourite's woman friends were loud in their admiration of the splendours of the place. Everything was perfect down to the smallest details: the kitchen sink was of white

marble, the banisters of the attic staircase of massive mahogany. The royal love affair was an expensive matter for France. On the day on which the house was thrown open, a Friday, "the tender and devoted guardian of this historic dwelling"—so the excellent Madame de Boigne terms Madame du Cayla—gave a luncheon to four hundred guests, at which no meat was served; then the green silk veil which covered a table fell and the effigy of the generous donor was revealed to the eyes of the reverent crowd. The king had not dared to come in person, but his drives often brought him in the direction of Saint-Ouen; he passed at full speed, as his habit was, but it was enough to satisfy his feelings.

Madame du Cayla was grateful for these favours, but the king's love, at times tyrannical, began to be burdensome to her. He would now never allow her to be absent, and she rebelled against his unreasonableness. "Why, I'm not to be allowed to stir!" she complained. The rôle of queen of France, she was finding, had its disadvantages, one of which was that she had to submit to the senile tendernesses of her patron: and one day there was nearly an open scandal.

It was a Wednesday, private audience day, on which the ushers were definitely ordered not to enter on any pretext. Suddenly they heard the noise of a fall and cries; but, unwilling to disobey their orders, and thinking that the king was playing a trick in order to test them, they did not move. The cries, however, were

redoubled; the door opened, and Madame du Cayla herself appeared, calling for help. The ushers hurried in and found the king lying on the floor, cursing and swearing. He had tried to get up, but had fallen, dragging Madame du Cayla with him; her arm had been caught under his heavy body, and she had had difficulty in freeing herself. Paris soon heard of the episode, and the favourite was in despair.

Life at the Tuileries became less agreeable. The king had doubtless perceived that he was treated more coldly, and his physical pain increased daily. He lost control of himself and flew into a rage with his servants, even the faithful Baptiste, on any pretext; he was heard shouting, "you damned swine, don't push so hard!" on the staircase of the Tuileries. As he needed help all day long, these scenes were ceaselessly repeated—in the evening, when he was put to bed and his nightcap put on, and in the morning, when he was carried from his bed to his armchair, his white silk shirt brought to him and spirits of wine poured on his hands. The sense of his own dignity which had sustained him throughout his life seemed to have vanished. Nevertheless he still believed that it was he who governed; he had, indeed, just "honoured his old age" by a great deed—the Spanish war.

The war was undertaken only to reestablish the rights of a Spanish despot, Ferdinand VII, whose subjects insisted on his granting a constitution. Chateaubriand declared that the war would give Louis XVIII

the crown for the second time. The king was persuaded by Madame du Cayla and the ministers, and, although a constitutional monarch, he threw a French army across the Pyrenees to replace an absolutist sovereign on his throne.

The campaign as a whole was a military promenade, if a rather unsteady one, and the former generals of the empire did not take it seriously. But the ultras, believing that the army was now devoted to their cause, made a great deal of the successes gained in Spain and prepared a triumphant reception for the Duc d'Angoulême, the commander-in-chief. There were several hitches, one of which was that the king was late; however, he pressed his nephew to his heart and uttered a few inaudible words amid the cheers of the crowd, which had been deprived of military spectacles for a long time past. Shortly afterwards he attended a topical play, *Vendôme en Espagne*, and seemed to enjoy an interlude played by the clown Mazurier got up as a monkey; but when the ballet began he went to sleep, and was only woken by the violin-playing of Baillot, a *virtuoso* of the day.

The Duc d'Angoulême, who knew what his achievements in Spain really amounted to, called the bombast that attended his return a piece of Don Quixotry. The king did not take by any means so modest a view of the affair. In this connection the evidence of a former *émigré*, M. de Puymaigre, is particularly illuminating. The king received him seated at a table, his

legs concealed by the table-cloth, which hung down to the floor. His face had lost its youthfulness; it was an effort to him to speak, and he seemed at the same time preoccupied and drowsy. The conversation was halting until Puymaigre had the bold idea of saying something about the recent victories of the king's army in Spain. Then his eyes lit up; he sat up straighter, seemed to swell in his armchair, and, as though the judgment of posterity had suddenly been revealed to him, he cried in a loud voice, "Yes, that will be a fine page in my history!" Then his head drooped again, a bitter smile twisted his lips, and he added in a low voice, so low that the words could scarcely be heard, "The last one!"

He slowly failed. He only attended to business in order that he might not be accused of neglecting it: he often used to say that a king who abdicated always regretted it; but in his heart he was anxious to be spared the necessity of making serious decisions. When the choice of a minister had to be made, he relied on his brother.

"I am old," he said, "and I should not like to make a choice without knowing what his views were. Take him the list."

Artois ruled in reality through the medium of Madame du Cayla. When Chateaubriand, suddenly suspected of Liberalism, had fallen into disfavour at the Pavillon de Marsan, the king, who had duly been got round, said, "I don't want to see that man again

after to-day." And Chateaubriand was literally dismissed like a lackey.

Louis XVIII was no longer under any illusion as to his condition. He asked Portal what form his death would take. Portal, a regular Court physician, tall, thin, perfectly dressed, with chestnut wig, silk stockings and buckled shoes, bowed and replied with banalities.

"Don't treat me like an idiot, Portal. What I want to know is whether the last crisis of my illness may be imperceptible, or whether I shall have to spend several days in agony."

"By all appearances, Sire, your Majesty's illness will take a slow and gradual course."

"That's no use to me. Slow and gradual! There is no hope, then, of my being found dead in my armchair?"

"I see no likelihood of it."

"Then I shan't be able to avoid my brother's surplices!" the king muttered between his teeth.

His brother's surplices haunted him: not that he was irreligious, for he had always performed his duties as a Christian, communicated, we are told, very often, and on such days deprived himself of the pleasure of seeing Madame du Cayla. But the genuineness of his religion had weakened with time; there was now little left but the outward forms of piety, and in spiritual matters, as in literature, he was becoming once more a man of the eighteenth century, a philosopher com-

bining his scepticism as well as he could with his obligations as a sovereign and regarding religion as "an elixir forming a necessary part of the compound of drugs of which royalty is made up."

In his opinion, if God existed and interested Himself in anything, it was certainly the house of Bourbon and its head: religious belief and divine right were indissolubly connected in his mind. But the bigotry of his brother and his entourage was particularly antipathetic to him; he saw in it a danger for the future, and he was right. When the Duchesse d'Angoulême and Madame du Cayla begged him to make his peace with God, he stoutly resisted them. Thank Heaven, he had still time for that.

He insisted on appearing and presiding with full ceremony at the opening of the session of the Chambers in 1824. He still wore his blue frock-coat, his gold epaulettes, his sword and white feathers, but his powdered hair now framed an emaciated face, lined with dark furrows. He began his speech in a firm voice, but ended it in a sort of indistinct mutter, though it had been written out for him in enormous letters, and the result was deplorable.

But he would not realise it for a moment, and received people in audience as before. His shrunken head fell on his breast between his still powerful shoulders; he could no longer look people in the face; they were announced to him, and he repeated the names of those whom he wished to honour with a few words.

He still assumed a tone of gallantry with the ladies. When his first chamberlain introduced one of them by name, he replied, "I recognised her by her small feet."

Sometimes, however, he became confused in his mind; he mistook General Saint-Chamans for General Talon, Madame du Cayla's brother, and referred to his sister in the most gracious terms. In vain the chamberlain shouted in his ear, "Sire, it is General Saint-Chamans!"—he would not desist. One day, when he was receiving a deputation of officers who had lately been made chevaliers of Saint-Louis, the officers thought they were passing in front of a corpse and did not stop.

Despite Portal's advice, he refused to take to his bed, repeating Vespasian's saying, "*Oportet imperatorem stantem mori*" ("An emperor ought to die standing"): and he still endeavoured, with splendid courage, to carry out the duties of a king. He had no longer strength even to hold a pen; he had long periods of drowsiness; his speech was confused; but flashes of intelligence sometimes showed that the clarity of his brain was not permanently weakened. One night when he was being put to bed, Portal grew impatient and urged the valets to be quicker:

"Take off his shirt!" he snapped.

At this the king recovered his power of speech.

"Monsieur Portal," he said, "my name is Louis

XVIII; you ought to have said 'Take off his Majesty's shirt.' "

When he could rely on his hearers, he used to utter words like this, as the dying often do:

"I shall be regretted when I am dead. If my brother persists in his plans of reforming the Constitution, he will not keep the crown for two years."

So he dropped the plummet into the future. One wonders what reflections were passing through that head, whose eyes could no longer see the sky.

He was still taken out driving at full speed, and his attendants had no sinecure. Sometimes he had attacks in the middle of Paris; they had to stop the carriage, obtain extract of balm mint, and take him back to the Tuileries almost at a walking pace.

He obstinately refused to change his manner of life, for a king had no right to be ill. In August, 1824, he went to stay at Saint-Cloud as usual. One evening, when he had been alone in his study for several hours, the gentleman in waiting, M. de Damas, became uneasy at hearing no sound, and opened the door an inch or two. The king had sunk forward on his writing-table with his head hanging down. Damas approached and spoke to him in a low voice. There was no answer. He took courage and touched him, first gently, then, without regard to etiquette, more sharply. The king did not move.

The doctors were sent for. Monsieur hurried in; the Duchesse d'Angoulême too, her dress still unfast-

ened, her clothes thrown on anyhow. The king was now lying back in his armchair, with purple face, bleeding nose and disordered hair. They unbuttoned his coat, and the blue ribbon from which he was never separated fell on the floor. The doctors declared that the pulse could just be felt. Monsieur ordered that an emetic should be administered and the king bled. One of the doctors was already taking out his lancet, but the king had heard what was said. Emetic, bleeding! he could not endure that. He suddenly recovered consciousness and angrily said to his brother:

"Ah, Monsieur, you thought you were king! You're in too great a hurry; the time has not come yet!"

The time, indeed, had not come yet. The king lasted for more than a month. On August 25, his birthday, he sat on his throne all doubled up; his head, no larger now than a child's, nearly touched his knees, and he could only see the courtiers passing before him by looking sideways. But although the gangrene continually grew worse and caused him terrible pain, he did not allow himself to utter a word of complaint or any admission that he was failing. "*Non pedes sed caput faciunt regem*" ("It is not the feet, but the head, that makes the king"), he used to say. He kept a careful eye on the rigid observance of the usual ceremony, ordered that he should be pushed into the dining-room of a morning and evening, although he could scarcely eat, and snubbed Portal when the doctor wished to put his

dressing on in his bedroom, and not in his study, as usual.

"Why am I not being taken in there?" he asked.

Even men who disliked him admired his amazing staunchness and resignation. He had never been so much the king, so consistent in the discharge of a monarch's duties and business. Such will-power, sustaining a body in which decomposition had actually set in, was really a sight that called for admiration.

On Sunday, September 12, he at last consented to go to bed and it was decided that bulletins of his health should be published. The agony had begun. He resisted no longer. He made his confession at last to please Madame du Cayla, and bade her a charming farewell. Then the Duc de Bordeaux and Mademoiselle, the Duc de Berry's children, were brought in and kissed his hand; he could not see them at all, for one of his eyes had completely dissolved and the other was beginning to go. On the 13th the sacramental oils were brought in procession; the Duchesses d'Angoulême and de Berry stood on each side of the bed with tapers in their hands, and the king received the last sacrament. But when, next day, he was asked to join in the prayers for the dying, he replied, "It is too soon. I do not feel that my end is so near as that." Then he fell into a doze. A few minutes later the grand almoner, not hearing him breathing any longer, began to pray. The king woke up and said, "Go on, Monsieur, since you have thought fit to begin. I am

not afraid of death; it is a poor sort of king that cannot die."

The royal family took its meals in the adjoining room; the king's place was laid, but covered up. Apart from that everything took place as if he were present. The doctors came in and out, and were asked, "Will it last much longer?"—"We do not know, but the crisis is not immediate." At times a cough, a sort of rattling noise, was heard.

Louis XVIII had not lost consciousness; he held out his arm to have his pulse felt, and when he was given something to drink, was able to say, "That's enough." The frequent changing of the dressings caused him horrible suffering: the bones of one leg were decomposed, and the other was simply one immense sore.

On the night of September 15th he had a fainting-fit, and it was thought that he was dead; but he began to breathe again. Although still capable of speech, he said nothing which could be called his last wishes. This was no surprise to those who knew him, for he had often said, with characteristic scepticism, "A king's last wishes are seldom respected." At one o'clock in the morning he asked that his hands might be joined on his breast. Whispers were heard from the neighbouring *salon*, where the courtiers possessing the right of the *grande entrée* were assembled. In the king's room the heat was stifling. The rattling sound continued. Suddenly there was a louder noise, and the

doctors hurried forward; but it was only M. d'Havré, who, sitting at the foot of the bed, had fallen asleep and was snoring.

The spectators looked at one another, horrified by the long duration of the death agony, when suddenly there was complete silence. The rattling noise had stopped. Portal held a candle close to the king's face; it was black and yellow, with open mouth, a terrifying mask. The flame burned steady and erect. Then the first chamberlain, who was holding the bed-curtain, let it fall back and, turning to the Comte d'Artois, said:

"Sire, the king is dead."

Monsieur knelt down and kissed his brother's hand. The lights were put out. Four o'clock struck. At the same moment the bedroom door which gave entrance to the *salon* was flung wide open, an usher cried in ringing tones, "*Messieurs, le Roi!*" and Charles X entered.

While the courtiers gathered round their new master, the body was left to the mercies of the servants. The bed was unceremoniously pushed aside to allow the room to be swept more easily. Not a taper was lit in the room. Finally Louis XVIII was placed on a bier for the lying-in-state: and twenty-four hours later, the embalming was carried out in the presence of the chief officials of the Court.

Charles X had an elaborate funeral organised. The horses were hung with black cloths, the swords bronzed,

the steel buckles darkened, the landaus draped in purple, and the whole household down to the humblest night-watchman wore mourning, "*le deuil de père*," as they called it. The coffin was surrounded with candles, and twelve Lazarists, relieving each other at fixed times, repeated the service for the dead both night and day. But there was no dignity about the ceremony. As the result of a quarrel between the grand almoner and the Archbishop of Paris, the Archbishop and his clergy refused to take part in the funeral. Then the master of the ceremonies, M. de Dreux-Brézé, did not know how to arrange the people present, lost his head and kept ejaculating, "*Entendons-nous! entendons-nous!*" ("Let us arrange things!") There was complete chaos, and the crowd contemplated the scene of disorganised pomp with something like amusement. Only the soldiers kept grave faces; in the Court carriages the chatter was as light-hearted as on an occasion of public rejoicing. Not one friend followed Louis XVIII's coffin.

At Saint-Denis, the herald at arms took, in turn, the king's helmet, shield and sword, and threw them one by one into the vault in which the body had been placed. They were heard rolling from step to step beneath the echoing arches, while the herald announced three times:

"*Le roi est mort! le roi est mort! le roi est mort!*"

But the magnificent ceremony left the courtiers of the new king unmoved. What connection was there,

they thought, between a helmet, shield and sword and the late monarch?

Contemporary judgments of Louis XVIII are astonishingly severe. It was only natural that old members of the Convention like Barère should call him "the most insidious and perfidiously cunning of intriguers": that Bonapartists should see in him only an old monkey sprung from a tiger, or more simply, "a cripple who had become, from the ravages of elephantiasis, a revolting incarnation of social dissolution": that ill-paid sharpers should say that he feared truth and death; and that Béranger should pause between two songs to declare his certainty that Louis XVIII had a false and wicked soul. All this is the ordinary terminology of rhetorical insult.

But the Royalists, though more courteous in form, do not treat him much better; the ultras, the noodles of ancient lineage of whom Lamennais speaks, cannot forgive his prudence and moderation, and accuse him of always doing his best to injure the monarchy. The constitutional Royalists, even those who had been his servants, accuse him of trickery, want of generosity, inhumanity even; he counted, they said, a man's life for nothing, much less his plighted word; and if he knew how to play the sovereign and surround himself by a *nimbus*, he had at his disposal but scanty means —always the same system, the same formulas. His sphere of action was as narrow as his brain; when he

died, all enthusiasm was dead, and the best that could be hoped for was to emerge from the rut into which he had dragged France.

Undoubtedly Louis XVIII was not calculated to gain affection. His haughty and at the same time elaborate manners, the dissimulation which he considered to be a kingly quality, his valetudinarian egotism, did not win hearts. He was not a faithful friend; he promised much and fulfilled little, and could not be relied on. The spy Montgaillard said wittily: "He was part old woman and part capon, part prince and part don."

But granted that he was an amalgam of these elements, that did not prevent him from doing good work, and politicians who were concerned with public affairs after his death recognised it. "He arrived too late and left too soon," Berryer said: and Thiers, a competent judge of such a question, declared that he was the best of our constitutional kings. If he did not attach himself closely to men, it was because he was testing them; if they did good work for France, he kept them: if they ceased to be useful, he dismissed them with a magnificent cynicism. His attitude towards the Charter was the same: he refused to tear it up because in practice it seemed to him to have the approval of the people and to be a guarantee of order. No one can deny that he had little capacity for bold flights of fancy and for generous thoughts; but the excess of ingenious subtlety which was one of his

characteristics did not in him exclude sound judgment.

Louis XVIII's chief merit was that, after living for twenty years in exile, he was able to place his hand on the heart of his dismembered country, and to understand, despite his education and family tradition, that the only hope lay in a policy of prudence and moderation.

He must be placed in the proper setting—his own time, the hour of his accession. To succeed Napoleon, at a moment when France was invaded, was a fearful test for a feeble old man. But the old man went steadily on, gradually rallied the Imperialists to him, as Napoleon had rallied the Republicans; he averted the calamities which threatened the country and left France rich, orderly and at peace with Europe. If we look farther on, past his tomb, and see how his work was ruined, foolishly and almost frivolously, by his brother Charles X, our respect for him is strengthened, and the figure of Louis XVIII becomes greater as it recedes.

THE END

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